
MR. WANDLE'S STORY.

BY N. P. DARLING.

It was at the Boston and Albany railroad depot in this city that I first saw Mr. Wandle. I was going to Worcester that afternoon. The "express" starts about two o'clock, I believe, and as I had fifteen or twenty minutes to spare, I went into the gentlemen's waiting-room and sat down. The gentleman in the seat next mine started up the moment I sat down, and made a rush for the door, casting a fearful glance over his shoulder at me. Then the door closed behind him.

He was a very singular looking gentleman, apparently about forty years of age, although at the first glance, you would have taken him for a man of sixty. His hair was white as snow, while his whiskers, which he wore long and straggling, were black as Day & Martin's blacking. His nose was a Roman; his eyes small, dark and restless; face pale as the palest moonbeam that ever beamed, and his trembling lips were blue. He was a small man, and so thin that you could have bored a hole through him anywhere with a two-inch gimlet.

But what was he afraid of me for? Am I such a terrible looking fellow? I rather think not. At least, my friends don't seem to think so.

"No," said I, "that man has been doing something—and it's something awful. And yet he doesn't look as if he was capable of committing any great crime. Perhaps, now,

the poor gentleman is only running away from his creditors."

But I had no more time to waste in conjectures, for the train was ready; and so, taking my valise, I went out, and was just passing through the gate, when I saw the thin gentleman dodge behind a very corpulent old lady who stood a few paces to the right of me. But I saw his restless dark eye gleaming at me over the old lady's shoulder.

"Well," said I, "if you go on this train, my dear sir, I'll see more of you before I get to Worcester." And passing through the gate, I got into the cars.

Every seat was occupied in the first car that I went into. As I entered the next car by one door, the thin gentleman entered it by the other, but he didn't see me. He advanced along the aisle, glancing cautiously to the right and left, slid into a seat, and the next moment I sat down beside him.

The thin gentleman started up and made an attempt to spring out of the window, but I caught him by the collar and forced him back into the seat.

"Then you *do* want me?" he said, trembling as if with the ague.

"Yes, I want you to sit down, and not attempt to dash your brains out by throwing yourself out of the car window. If you don't want to go—"

"O, but I do! I do!" Then he put his lips to my ear. "You won't take me back, my dear fellow, will you?"

"Take you back! Why should I take you back?" And then the thought flashed through my brain that I was sitting beside an escaped lunatic, and I began to feel quite as uncomfortable as my companion. "Who do you think I am?" I asked.

"You're a detective, and my wife has put you on my track;" answered the thin gentleman, in a hoarse whisper, glancing cautiously around among the passengers, as if fearful that some one would overhear him.

I laughed.

"No, my dear sir, you were never more mistaken in your life. I'm plain Robinson Dobson, watchmaker, Washington Street."

The thin gentleman grasped my hand.

"Egad!" cried he, "I knew I had seen you before; and I thought—but, by the way, *don't* you know my wife?"

"How should I? Why, I don't know you, and I don't think I ever saw you before."

"Then you *don't* know her—*don't* know Mrs. Duncan Wandle?"

"No sir."

The thin gentleman threw himself back in his seat with a sigh of relief. Then he mopped his face with his pocket-handkerchief and in the act, his black whiskers fell to the floor, leaving his face almost as smooth as a glass bottle.

"Ha!" I exclaimed.

"I am Duncan Wandle," cried the thin gentleman, clapping his whiskers into the crown of his hat, and clapping the hat on his head.

"And Mrs. Wandle is your wife?"

"Doubly so; and I'm running away from her, by thunder! Yes, Mr. Dobson, I'm running away from the aforesaid female. I'm going to San Francisco, and if she follows me there I'm going to the Sandwich Islands, and so on, clear round the world."

"And suppose she follows you all the way round?"

"Then I'll go round again," said Mr. Wandle.

"And if she still follows?"

"I'll keep going round till I tire her out."

"A stern chase is a long one, they say."

"And Mrs. Wandle will find it so, Mr. Robinson Dobson." And the thin gentleman jammed his hat over his eyes and looked very determined indeed.

For the next fifteen minutes Mr. Wandle

never opened his mouth. He closed his small black eyes, and I thought he had gone to sleep, but he startled me suddenly by grasping my arm and asking me if I was fond of stories.

"Yes, Mr. Wandle. Have you got one to tell?"

"Have I got a story to tell? Well, you better believe I have, and I'm going to tell it to you, whether you listen or not. Fact is, I've got to tell my story or bust, Mr. Robinson Dobson, that's just what's the matter with me."

"I'm all attention, my dear sir," I replied, "and really, I must confess that I am very anxious to hear your story."

"Well, you *shall* hear it. I'll take off my hat to keep my brain cool, for the fact is, Mr. Robinson Dobson, when I get to thinking, and when I remember what I was, and then consider what I am, why, sir, I feel as if I should go mad. Sometimes I think I *am* mad. What do you think about it?"

"Why," said I, smiling at the odd question of my thin friend, "when I saw you trying to throw yourself out of the window, I *did* think that your mind was rather unsound."

"Of course you did. What else could you think? Why, I don't believe I am perfectly sane, do you?"

"I can tell better after I hear your story, perhaps."

"Well, perhaps so. I'll tell it, and then, if you think I've been through with enough to make a man insane, why, when we get to Worcester, you just chuck me into the asylum. I'll be out of the way of my wife then, anyway."

"To begin, then, ten years ago I was a happy man. I was a bachelor of thirty, and had just come into possession of considerable property by the death of my father. As he was my only father, and I was his only child, of course it all fell to me, and it was a very pretty plum I assure you."

"At that time I resided in Boston, boarding with Mrs. Josephine Hickorydickery. She was a widow, and about my own age. She was a large woman, a very large woman, Mr. Dobson, and I'm a very small man, and quite thin, too. You notice my thinness? Yes. Everybody does."

"But to return to Mrs. Hickorydickery. Besides being very extensive in her proportions, she had red hair. Now, my dear sir, you may like red hair. Your wife may have red hair, and your children, and all your re-

ations, and you may think it is the most beautiful color in the world for hair, but dye my eyebrows, if I do!

"Aside from her hair, Mrs. Hickorydickery was a very fine-looking woman, and I told her so. She didn't thank me for telling her, of course. Her sex is never thankful, no matter what you do for 'em. You may not think so, Mr. Dobson, but I can't help that. I've seen something of women, and I know 'em just like a book.

"Now, I'm not naturally a marrying man. The simple fact that I remained a bachelor until I was thirty years of age, without ever having made love to a woman, proves that, I think. And I might have remained a bachelor until this day, if it hadn't been for that property that my father left me. I'm not handsome. You smile, as if you doubted my word, but I'll leave it to any woman with a well-balanced head, if I am not about the poorest specimen of humanity she ever saw. I am not talented. I haven't a single talent for anything. As Professor Bumpheeler said when he examined my head:

"'Mr. Wandle,' said he, 'you ask me to give you a chart, but you don't need one. Yours is a very serious case,' he continued, 'and I feel almost inclined to doubt the facts; but phrenology never lies. The truth of the matter is this; you're a perfect dampfool!' And the phrenological gentleman was right, Mr. Dobson. I told him so, and gave him a dollar for his honesty.

"Now, with these facts before you, sir, you naturally ask, why should any woman want to marry me? Why, for my money, of course. They never thought of throwing sweet glances at me until I became a man of wealth. Then, sir, when it became known that I counted my money by thousands, every unmarried female at Mrs. Hickorydickery's 'went for me.' Miss Lute—she was a flaxen-haired creature, with blue eyes and a milk-and-watery complexion—used to play for me every night in the parlor; and she banged that poor piano until there was no more music left in it than there is in a dry sink. Miss Bate, she was also a blonde, and 'Pale as the morn when first her silver beam Steals through the envious curtain of a cloud,' sang for me. Yes, she sang until she was so hoarse that she couldn't speak above a whisper. Miss Knott read poetry to me. Read it until she had exhausted every native poet, and then, instead of commencing on the

English bards, she hired a newspaper fellow to write sonnets to my eyes, my nose, and my beauty generally; and she published those sonnets under her own name, and then read them to me.

"Miss Dott danced with me. Yes, we waltzed and we waltzed, until one evening the sweet creature slipped out of my arms, fell, and broke her leg. Then *she* was satisfied.

"But the playing, the singing, the reading and waltzing were as nothing to one thing more I had to undergo. Mrs. Hickorydickery used to fold me in her arms and kiss me! Yes sir, I was *obliged* to be kissed, and by a woman with red hair, for how could I help myself? I was weak, and she was strong. But if she had *only* kissed me, I might have been happy yet. But she wasn't satisfied with that. She always managed to have some one else in the room, and she always made them think that I was the affectionate one, that I was doing all the kissing. Of course she could handle me just like a puppet; and she'd say:

"Now, Mr. Wandle, you *shan't* kiss me, unless you're the strongest, and I know you *are*!"

"That was the way *she* did it, and it wasn't long before all my friends were bothering me about the lovely Widow Hickorydickery, for they all thought that I was really in love with her.

"At last, one night the widow told me that we had waited about long enough.

"'Long enough?' said I.

"'Yes, Duncan. Why can't we be married this fall just as well as to wait until next winter?'

"'Well, ma'am,' said I, 'wont you wait until I ask you to marry me?'

"'Ask me! Do you mean to say that you *haven't* asked me? Do you mean to say—'

"'I mean to say just this,' said I, starting up and looking as large and as fierce as I could. 'I mean to say that I never asked you, and I never intend to ask you to become Mrs. Wandle!'

"The widow smiled, and folded me to her bosom.

"'Don't get angry, Duncan, dear,' said she. 'You know you *are* going to marry me.'

"'Never!' I cried.

"'Then I shall sue you for breach of promise!'

"'But I *haven't* promised!'

"'We shall see, my dear!'

" 'Very well, we *will* see.'

" 'Good-night, love.'

"The next morning, I called upon a lawyer and stated my case.

" 'Better marry her,' said Mr. Gogg. 'She's got everything her own way, and if you go to law about it, you'll lose the case, sure. But perhaps you can settle with her for ten thousand dollars. If you can, settle, and in future, as the elder Weller said to his son Sammy, "Beware of the vidders!"'

"But the widow wouldn't settle for ten thousand; and so—and so—I—I married her."

Mr. Wandle paused here, and covered his face with his hat to hide his emotions. At last he recovered sufficiently to continue his story.

"After we were married, she gave up her boarding-house, and we lived in the grandest style imaginable. Nothing was too rich or rare for my wife. She invested a fortune in diamonds alone, and in less than a year, my dear sir, Duncan Wandle wasn't worth a cent. Mrs. Wandle had either spent it, or got it into her own hands, and I was left with nothing.

"I proposed to Mrs. Wandle then that we should separate, and she agreed to the proposal. A week after, I started for the West; and finding friends in Chicago, I soon obtained a situation; but fearing that my wife might, at some future time, come after her 'little hubby,' as she used to call me, I applied for; and obtained a bill of divorce.

"Then, my dear sir, I was happy. As happy almost as I had been in my bachelor days. But I was born to ill luck, and it follows me.

"One day my Uncle Benjamin came home from Australia. Of course he didn't come home in one day, but he arrived in Chicago one day, came to see me, was taken sick that night, and the next morning he was dead. As I had never seen my uncle half a dozen times during his life, my grief at his very sudden departure was not extraordinarily heart-rending; but when I found, after the funeral, that he had left me half a million of money, I tell you, Mr. Robinson Dobson, I fairly howled, for I knew that my late wife would be after me, and how was I to protect myself?

"As soon as I could, conveniently, I packed my trunks and left for St. Louis; and I was not a moment too soon, for my former partner appeared in Chicago the very day that I

left. She followed me to St. Louis, and I hurried away to Cincinnati. Then I went to Baltimore, to Philadelphia, and at last to New York, with that woman close at my heels. However, she lost the scent at last. She went up the Hudson to Albany, and I went to Newport.

"It was right in the height of the season, and I determined that I would marry the first handsome and agreeable lady that I could find, who would have me.

"In less than a week I made the acquaintance of just the woman I wanted. She was beautiful, very.

'Her step was royal, queenlike, and her face As beautiful as a saint's in paradise.'

"I think I was almost in love with her beauty. She had black hair, and I always did dote on raven tresses; and then such sweet and dovelike eyes! Yes, I almost loved her, but my reason for wishing to marry her was that I might have a wife to protect me against Mrs. Hickorydickery.

"I suppose I should have taken my lawyer's advice and kept away from the widows, for my 'intended' was one. But she was so beautiful that I had made up my mind to marry her if possible, even before learning her name.

"It was said, by those that knew, that Mrs. Jarvis Freeman was wealthy, and consequently she had scores of lovers, old and young. But what surprised them all was that such a magnificent woman (she was a perfect Juno in form) should deign to cast her eyes upon me. Perhaps they forgot that I was worth half a million. I'm sure that I was fool enough to think that she loved me for myself alone.

"Our courtship was short, for before the end of the season Mrs. Freeman had promised to be mine.

"She returned to her home in New York about the first of September, and I followed her soon after. I stood in such fear of my former wife that I couldn't feel safe outside of Mrs. Freeman's protecting presence.

"We were married in October. Ah! how well I remember that day! What a sense of relief stole over my senses when the minister pronounced us one!

"We were going to Europe on our wedding tour; but we didn't go. No, we didn't go."

Here Mr. Wandle stopped to groan, and again he covered his face with his hat. But

after a momentary pause he went on again:

"Immediately after returning from church my wife returned to her room. Her maid came to me soon after, and said that her mistress would like to see me.

"When I entered the room she was seated in an easy-chair, looking, if possible, more beautiful than ever.

"'Duncan,' she began, smiling sweetly, 'I have sent for you for a very particular purpose.'

"'Well, darling,'

"'Well, Duncan, the gentleman of whom I hired this house and this furniture, is very anxious about the rent, and—'

"'What! hired? Don't you *own* the house?'

"'Is it possible, Duncan, that you don't recognize me? Don't you know your own Josephine?' And with a laugh she threw off her beautiful black glossy hair.

"'A wig! I yelled.

"'Yes, a wig, hubby dear. You see I had my red hair cut close and covered it up, because I knew you didn't like the color.'

"'And you are—'

"'I am Mrs. Wandle, formerly Mrs. Hickorydickery.' And she laughed sweetly.

"'But your complexion?' I gasped.

"'Enamelled, my love.'

"'Great heavens! And you've got me again?' I groaned, throwing myself into a chair.

"'Yes, darling, you are doubly mine, now, for we've been twice married.'"

Mr. Wandle paused to wipe the perspiration from his brow. Then he looked into his hat, and then he turned his small black eyes on my countenance.

"I gave it up then," he said. "I thought it useless to fight against fate, particularly when that fate was a woman, and such a woman as my wife. But yesterday we came to Boston, and I can't tell you why, but once there, my courage revived, and I determined to cut loose from my wife at once and forever. I've got my money where she can't get it, and I'll spend every cent of it rather than let her catch me again. But if she once gets her eye on me, I shall have to succumb. However, she's at the Revere House, and I am here."

"But I've got my eye on you," said a voice.

Mr. Wandle uttered one piercing shriek, jammed his hat over his eyes and sank into one corner of the seat.

I turned and confronted a tall elegantly-dressed lady of magnificent proportions, sitting in the seat directly back of us. I had noticed her before, more particularly from the fact, that until now she had been closely veiled. She smiled sweetly as her eyes met mine.

"This is Mrs. Wandle, I presume," said I.

"Yes sir. My husband, I believe, has been telling you about my little peculiarities," laughing. "Would you object to changing seats with me?"

"O no, not in the least."

I arose. Mr. Wandle squirmed, and turned an imploring glance upon my face, but I could not help him. Mrs. Wandle took my place, and I went into the smoking-car.

So ended Mr. Wandle's story. I have seen him twice since, but always in company with the lady whom he has twice married.



MR. ENDERBY'S IDYL.

BY MRS. FANNY PALMER.

A SLANT bar of morning sunshine filtered through the syringa bush, with its snowstorm of blossoms, into the kitchen window. It lay along the floor and touched the hem of Laura Waldron's gingham dress. Laura was standing before the ironing-table. The plaits of her father's Sunday shirt were ready laid; she had her hand upon the flatiron with which the first critical impress was to be made. Laura was too good a housewife not to know the value of seconds at this juncture, and yet she did not proceed with her work. Her eyes went absently after the sunshine through the east window; a tremulous smile hovered about her lips. She was thinking to herself that she was perfectly happy.

Now it takes a somewhat rare combination of circumstances to enable most folks to reach that purple altitude of "perfect happiness," and to know that they are there. But then, Laura, as the motherless "head" of her stepfather's family, had been drilled to small expectations and large sacrifices. She had not been miserable while she drudged from morning till night for these half-brothers and sisters, who accepted her services as a matter of course, and rode roughshod over her forbearance; she had never considered that it was intended she should do anything else.

One day she discovered to the contrary. One day the white star of love rose in her low horizon, bathed every common object with its dazzle, and then stood still at the zenith to guide her to the delicious experience of her own value and supremacy.

Laura did not state the case in just this way. In fact, she did not state it at all. She only accepted the fact that George Clafin had chosen her and dowered her with his love, and asked her to be his helpmate, with blissful gratitude; only said to herself, standing there before the well-filled basket of folded clothes, that she was "perfectly happy."

She was all alone in the kitchen. Her stepfather was foreman in a machine-shop—Reeves and Enderby's machine-shop—and had been gone to his work since seven o'clock. The four children had just started for school. Lutie, the eldest, was fifteen,

and knew enough, folks said, for her station. But Laura insisted that she need not leave school just yet; which meant till June, when she was to be married. So she was all alone with her work—the ironing and the early dinner, and her happy thoughts.

George had spent the preceding evening with her, and they had talked over all their plans. George was draughtsman, also for Reeves and Enderby, and in receipt of a good salary. He didn't mean to spend it all on living, though. Laura and he were going to get up in the world some day, and meant to begin as they could hold out. He had five hundred dollars laid up. Did Laura think she could furnish the cottage they would rent with that?

"O yes, *splendidly*," Laura did not mean to convey an idea of actual splendor. Neither *mogreet* carpets, nor carved cabinets, nor buhl, nor bronzes are attainable with five hundred dollars. But as she thought of the fresh wall-paper, to correspond with the bright carpets, the Nottingham curtains, the couches and chairs, home made, of warm-toned moreen, with which her lover's capital and her own dexterity should furnish their home, her fancy did invest the picture with a certain splendor—"the light which never was on sea or land." Neither would she go forth quite empty-handed. There were some dainty china and fine-spun linen which the mother's legacy had secured to her first-born, and Laura was stealing time from sleep to bestow lavish needlework on monograms and frills.

Her thoughts were busy with these preparations while her hands went on mechanically with the morning's work. Two golden morning hours went by, and the clothes bars were filling up rapidly. Laura stopped when the clock struck eleven to look into the dinner-pot, which emitted a savory steam as she raised the lid. It was time to add the carrots and mix the dumplings. She took up the basin in which the former lay, cut in slim golden wedges, and carried them to the stove. For months and years to come every feature of that moment's scene stood photographed before her. She never knew why she paused and glanced, as she did, at the

hands of the clock, the dimples of sunshine, the sleepy cat. But as she did so she heard the gate-latch click sharply, the gate swing back shortly with a slam. Then a dozen feet scuffling heavily along the planks, jostling their way somehow through the open door. She saw George Claflin clearly one of the crowd. Then it was all blurred for a minute. They stood around the couch laying their burden down.

"He is hurt some, Laura—the machinery—"

She saw then, her stepfather, not a man whom any one could love overmuch, a harsh, silent, exacting parent towards his own, more harsh, and silent, and exacting towards her; but helpless, hurt to death now. Her strength came back:

"A doctor—"

"O yes, two or three doctors in a few minutes. We thought it was best to bring him home as soon as possible. Was there anything they could do? No use for all to stay."

The doctors came. They hadn't much to say at first. The flesh wounds were bad. If he had been twenty years younger it would have been in his favor. Then, as the days wore away, they repeated that the flesh wounds were bad, and the warm weather unfavorable, and so on, and so on, till slowly poignant anxiety grew to dreary certainty. The injured man would never be well again. The wounds did not heal, the contracted muscles did not relax. Wrenched, and twisted, and maimed, he would never be of use any more in this world. Such was the verdict that came to the helpless family with the June skies and summer roses.

"What is to become of them, Laura?" George Claflin said, as he and his betrothed stood talking about this sharp thrust of destiny. "Lutie might do something; I suppose, and Will can take a trade. But that provides for two only—"

"Yes, that is the question," Laura said, as he paused. "I turn it and twist it, and do not get any answer. It was all so unexpected. Reeves and Enderby are going to pay this quarter's salary as if—as if nothing had happened. After that"—she stood before this strong man, who had her whole love and thoughts—a little creature with a pale complexion, light gray eyes, a great coil of sandy hair twisted quite simply—a quiver about her sweet red mouth—"after that I don't know indeed what is to become of us."

"You are provided for, Laurie. You have not forgotten that this is June?"

"No, George. But—"

"But what, darling?"

"Everything is altered now, you see." They were standing close together in the porch. The summer dark hid the pathos of her face. "I could not leave them now, George."

Perhaps he was not the first man who has resented unselfishness.

"Why, Laura, what can you do for them? You have worn yourself out in their service as it is, and which of them will ever thank you? Lutie is as old as you were when your mother died. Let her take hold as you did."

Laura was crying against her lover's shoulder. "You must not tempt me," she plead.

"Tempt you, child! Why, I think I have some claim—the first claim, I should say."

"O George, duty has the first claim."

"Of course, Laura, you're free to choose between us."

She started away from him. "You don't mean—"

"I don't mean that I'm going to give you up, no. But it amounts to about the same thing. If you can't marry me now, I'd like to know when you can. If these children stand between us now, I'd like to foresee when they'll be removed. We love each other; we are ready to marry. I don't acknowledge any obstacle as having a right to part us."

She did not utter any of the thoughts which struggled into her mind as to how he might have lightened and shared her load.

"We shall have to wait. Don't you think your love will bear the test of waiting?"

"I don't want to wait. I want you now," he answered.

It was hard to deny him, yet strange to say she never thought of yielding. Out of her own helplessness she must find help for the children of her dead mother. She gave her strength, her wits, her very self to the problem of making both ends meet, when it was decided that the mainstay of the family was to be henceforth its burden, and that each must do what they could for their joint support.

Reeves and Enderby were liberal and thoughtful. The injured man had been a valued workman, and they showed their appreciation of his services. The junior partner only resided in the village. It was like him

to come occasionally to the stricken household. It seemed possible that some hint of Laura Waldron's self-sacrifice might have reached his ears, for he treated her on these occasions with a grave studious deference, a kind of reverential admiration, which made some village gossip recollect that Mr. Enderby was a widower of some fifteen years standing.

The summer wore away and winter came. They took in sewing. Will earned a small salary in a store; Lutie had gone to a neighboring town to teach. But it was hard getting on. Just then it was proposed to Laura to take a boarder, an elderly literary man, who would pay a good price. The proposal, which came through Mr. Enderby, was accepted. The parlor was given up to the new-comer, and so, at the end of a year, the gap and rent of that morning's accident was patched and bridged after a fashion, and the family life moved on in its new grooves.

And now, perhaps, Laura might think again about that little home of her own—might go back to the dream which had been so rudely broken. But George Claflin, having sullenly accepted her decision, seemed indifferent about revoking it. He visited her, just the same, as her acknowledged lover. Just the same? No, not the same, and yet it was impossible to detect the difference. He shortened his visits after the parlor was rented. What was the use of staying later? There was no chance for seeing Laura, he said. True enough, there was not much chance for courtship in the dingy little sitting-room, with the morose invalid in his patent chair, and the boisterous inquisitive children close at hand. But if Laura followed him to the door at parting, for a little privacy, he was more apt to express regret than anticipation:

"This is different from what we looked forward to a year ago, Laurie."

Once she answered, "Yes, but 'this' isn't to last always, George."

She meant to signify what she was beginning to feel, that they would soon be able to spare her. Claflin answered, gloomily:

"It seems likely to last as long as your youth and energy will."

The words cut her. She slipped her hand out of his, and said "good-night" very quietly. Up stairs in her chamber she held the candle and looked sharply at her face in the glass. She was fading. She seldom thought about herself. She had never thought she

was pretty, but now it struck her with anguish to see how thin and worn her face was, her temples hollow, her cheeks white. She recollected that she was twenty-three. It came to her mind how Will had resented some of the boys saying she was "a taffy-colored little old maid" one day. She turned and looked at Lutie, who had come home for a few days' vacation, and was asleep in her bed. Lutie was fresh-tinted, delicately rounded. Laura felt the contrast. A sickening shudder of jealousy came over her.

It was a bit of romance anyway that had brought Lutie home. One of the young men of the place had driven over to B—, where she was teaching, and brought her back in time for the excursion to the island, which was to take place in two or three days.

Laura thought to herself that probably George would have liked to go also, only that of late she never could go anywhere. It was hard for him to have her tied so. But the need wasn't as pressing as it had been, and she would begin to break away from her bondage. She would go on the excursion with the rest. Why, George would begin to think she was a little old maid, too, if he never saw her in anything but a gingham dress and check apron. She went to her drawer and got out a white pique, somewhat yellow and old-fashioned. Late as it was she set to work ripping, contriving, altering; and finally trying on, with flushed cheeks and heavy eyes, with the determination to "do up" the suit on the morrow, and be thus prepared for the excursion. George had not spoken of it, but of course he would go when he found she was ready.

George did not make the discovery, however. He came in for a few moments the night before, heard Lutie and young Carden discuss their plans, but appeared so oblivious to the possibility of Laura's going that pride and shyness made it impossible for her to open her lips.

She helped Lutie off when the time came, early of a long bright June afternoon, and then began to fold and put away her own unneeded dress. Suddenly she dropped it. Her long-garnered, unsuspected heartache mastered her, and she cried passionately. What did George Claflin mean? Was he growing tired of her? Her eyes flashed as she dried them. She must know what he meant. She was the last one to hold him to an irksome bond.

In the early days of their engagement

Laura had gone a few times to meet her lover near the shop as he came from work. She thought she would go to-day. They could talk as they walked.

It was a long time since Laura had dressed herself so carefully as she did that day. She looped her hair in braids as Lutie did, and put on the pretty white dress, after all, and fastened her mother's gold beads around her throat. Toward six o'clock she started. It was a long walk to the machine-shop. It seemed very pleasant to Laura to leave the street and linger along the river bank. Her jealousy appeared morbid to her now. She felt in harmony with the sweet summer scene.

She had walked slowly, and began to wonder at length why George did not come. She passed group after group going home, but not him. At last she was close to the shop. Mr. Enderby was coming out, and lifted his hat to her in his grave fashion.

"Is George Claflin in the shop, sir?" she asked, hesitating.

Mr. Enderby looked at her. "George went down to the island this afternoon," he said.

"He need not have been so sly if he wanted to be mean," was Laura's thought; and it kept her from showing how she was shocked.

Mr. Enderby walked away. Laura turned in another direction; anywhere, not to be seen. It was growing dark. The river ran in purple and amber ripples among the reeds. She watched it with fascination. She did not think of suicide. She only longed to be embraced, upheld by something stronger than herself. Was there any such thing except God and death?

Shortly the moon rose full and white. She crept along toward the dock to which the river party would soon return, and hid herself in the shadow to see him pass. This once—then she never wanted to see him again. She waited and waited. At last they came, laughing, with music playing, carrying great branches of pink laurel. Laura could hardly stand; she shivered with the damp. At last George Claflin appeared. A young girl held his arm. He was carrying her shawl and flowers. It was too dark to see her face, but Laura felt that she was pretty. In a few minutes they had all gone by. She roused herself to get away. It was a very lonesome place down among the great warehouses that fronted the water, and as she stepped forward a shadow fell before her and frightened her.

"Miss Waldron," said Mr. Enderby, "you ought not to be here alone. Let me walk home with you."

"O no—"

"You will not deny me when you know how very much I wish to." He drew her cold hand within his arm.

She dared not refuse. They walked on in rapid silence.

"Miss Waldron," said Mr. Enderby, at last, "will you forgive me a plain question? Is George Claflin anything to you?"

It was a minute before she could answer. She knew why the question was put; she knew how she must answer it. At length she said, faintly, "Nothing."

Again they walked on in silence till Mr. Enderby spoke:

"Miss Waldron, I know that you have never thought of me as a lover. It is needless to remind you of my age or my pretensions. I only want to say to-night that my uneventful career has had many sorrows, and never so great a joy as has come to me through the lovely idyl of your life. I have watched more keenly than you can guess. I think I have seen the transparent all. Is it of any use for me to tell you how my heart longs for you and your trouble? longs to protect and shelter you from any further pain? Laura, is it of any use?"

She released herself somehow from his support. They were under the thick-leaved larches now of the village street, the moonbeams filtering in silver through their screen.

"Mr Enderby"—she wrung her hands in her pain—"O no—O, why should I have given you cause?"

"Hush, child. You have given me no cause. It is all my own presumption. But do not answer me to-night. Think a little of what I can be to you, what I can give you, before you speak. And if George Claflin is nothing to you—"

She laid her hand upon his arm.

"Let me speak, Mr. Enderby, now. I *must* speak. I said he was nothing; he is not. But I can never love any other man."

"It is he, then—"

"Yes, it is he who has outgrown his preference."

"And yet he has complained of you."

"He had no right to."

"He said that he was not sufficient for you, and I believed he said what was true."

"He did not believe what he said, Mr. Enderby. He knows that only a sense of

duty has made me deny him. He knows now that it is for him to speak and claim me—”

“What, now? Yet you said—”

“Said he was nothing to me, because he will not be. To-day—”

“Laura, stop a moment. Do not judge him for to-day.”

“I can never forgive him—”

“Not when you know that it was I who sent him against his will by appealing to his pride? Laura, it is I who have encouraged him to lose faith in you—to suspect that he failed to satisfy you. I—who have made him jealous of you—I believed that I was doing right. And I—I loved you.”

Laura had been brave in her abasement; now she was humble.

“The young lady with whom you saw him to-day is my niece, Miss Waldron, a school-girl here on a visit; at my request he accompanied the poor girl, who is so disfigured by

the scars of a burn as to be very shy in society.”

Laura drooped her head.

“Miss Waldron,” pursued her companion, “George Claflin is coming towards us. Let me give you back to him as my amend.”

Late that summer night Laura at length laid her head upon her pillow. Her head was giddy, but her heart was at rest. George and she understood all now; how George had grown jealous of Mr. Enderby, and, too proud to urge Laura to fidelity, had stood aloof to bide the issue. And Laura had told her pitiful little story, and ended by once more declaring herself “perfectly happy.”

In September this “perfect happiness” was consummated by marriage. And the five hundred dollars did actually buy splendors, for Laura’s cottage home and its essentials of furniture were a bridal gift from Mr. Enderby.

MRS. CAMERON'S EXPERIMENT.

BY MATTIE WINFIELD TORREY.

MR. CAMERON was in a hurry. He was one of the most punctual of men, as the whole household knew, and here he was kept waiting until this time for the breakfast which should have been on the table a full half hour ago. He walked the floor, watch in hand, alternately consulting it and the door through which the belated meal ought to make its appearance.

"Half past seven!" he muttered. "What upon earth does it mean? They know I must catch the quarter past eight train, and how am I to do it if I am to be kept waiting in this outrageous fashion? Thirty-five minutes past! Amelia must speak to the cook. This is going beyond all reason. I cannot endure—"

At that moment there was a thumping against the door, an ineffectual effort to turn the knob, and the voice of Mrs. Cameron called out:

"Open the door, James, please!"

"Hey! What? Amelia?" cried the gentleman, complying with the request. "Bless me! what does this mean?" For there was his wife, breakfast-tray in hand, her face unbecomingly flushed, cuffs turned back, hair falling from the net into which it had been hastily tucked, and a general air of having been hard at work.

"It means," replied the lady, with a very decided air, advancing and depositing her tray upon the table, "that I am not to be tyrannized over any longer by menials! From this time forward I intend to do my own cooking."

"But, my dear, I do not understand. I thought Ellen a very good cook, and had no idea you contemplated discharging her."

"Nor had I, until this morning, when, for the third time in as many days, she coolly informed me that her mother had sent for her, and requested permission to go home for the rest of the morning. She has been dreadfully unsteady of late, running home sometimes twice a day, and coming back only to sigh and complain about a sick father and brother; so I finally told her she had better make up her mind to stay in either one place or the other, for I could no longer depend upon her. She

seemed to feel aggrieved, and took herself off, and I've no idea she'll return."

"And so you found yourself 'monarch of all you surveyed?'" quoted Mr. Cameron, as he made frantic attempts to sever a bit of steak. "My dear, do you think this steak is quite done? Shall I send you out a fresh candidate? German, French, Irish—which shall it be? Another cup of coffee, if you please; the other was half grounds. I shall hardly have time to catch the train."

"You needn't mind about sending out a cook. I am tired of insolence, and shall at least try the experiment of doing alone."

Being in haste, Mr. Cameron did not stay to argue the question, but bidding his wife a hurried "good-morning," he hastened off, and was whirled away to the city and his business.

Mrs. Cameron, left to herself, felt all the responsibility of her position, put on a brave air, and determined to prove herself equal to the emergency.

First, she must run up stairs and dress the children, for there were three, Julia, Fred and Willie, aged respectively, six, four and two. The dressing was not accomplished without some difficulty, for the children were cross, and interposed every possible obstacle to delay the process. Miss Julia, who was in favor of a pink dress, while her mother decreed a blue one, was not brought to submission without a decided struggle. Willie kicked off his shoes and stockings while Fred was being washed, and when they were being replaced, Fred overturned a pitcher, and flooded the carpet, after which the three made a simultaneous rush for the dining-room, quarrelled over their father's chair, each wishing to occupy his seat at table, squabbled through their breakfast, which ended in a general melee, paying no attention to their mother's demand for silence. Spoiled children indeed they were, as the mother was finding to her sorrow. As in the case of so many overworked mothers, Mrs. Cameron allowed her time to be so completely taken up with her manifold duties as housekeeper, seamstress, nursery-maid,

kitchen-girl and lady of the house, as to leave no time in which the mental or moral training of her children could be carried on. So they literally ran wild, and either quarrelled and fought, or plunged conjointly into mischief, the sole occasion upon which they could agree to act in concert.

You have seen such families often. Heaven help you if you have your home in such a one!

To get her noisy brood out of the way, in order that she might proceed to do up her morning's work, was Mrs. Cameron's first endeavor. She suggested that they would do well to go into the backyard, where was a swing and other means of childish diversion.

The backyard! No indeed, not they! They were fully decided upon going into the frontyard, and go they did; and the result of their morning's pastime was indicated by two or three despoiled flower-beds and an overturned and fractured vase.

Quite a different scene was being enacted in the little cottage at the further end of the village in which resided the parents of Ellen. The father, an industrious mechanic, had met with an accident some months before, and was now lying, pale and emaciated, with a painfully fractured limb, while Freddy, the dear little brother who had been an invalid from his birth, was bravely trying to endure in silence the dreadful pain which made his life a burden almost too heavy to be borne.

Ah! could Ellen's mistress have seen the light which came into the faces of both father and brother as the girl passed the threshold of her humble home, she would not have begrudged the few hours which the sad-hearted little maid had been able to spend with her loved ones.

"Teddy has had a bad night," said the mother, a gentle fair-haired woman, worn out with poverty and weeks of wakefulness; "and the poor father got no wink of sleep, what with the pain and the fever."

Ellen kissed her father, and folded Teddy in her arms; persuaded the heavy-eyed mother to lie down and rest a bit, and sat down to soothe and comfort the boy, who, lulled by the sweet tones of her gentle voice, at last drifted away from the shores of sight and sense, and forgot his pains in sleep.

Bathing her father's feverish hands and face, straightening up his pillows, and ad-

ministering what comfort she could, she went noiselessly about the room, putting in order the few articles of furniture it contained, arranging everything in the neatest possible manner.

When the mother awoke there was a cup of tea and a plate of toast ready for her breakfast, and the poor woman was so far comforted by the presence of her child as to sit down with real satisfaction and something of an appetite to her meal.

"I wish we could have you at home every day, Ellen," said she; thus unconsciously making it easier for the girl to communicate the distressing fact that she had been as good as discharged by her mistress.

"I'm sure," said Ellen, "she don't expect me to come back. She seemed so vexed because I have run down here to see you a few times; and when I told her how sick father and Teddy were, she didn't seem to mind, but just asked what doctor we employed; and when I told her we were too poor to have any doctor, she merely opened her eyes as if she didn't understand."

"She don't know what it is to be poor, and be deprived of the merest necessities of life. O Ellen! I don't know what we are to do if your wages fail us. Never a cent of money in the house, and the poor father no good for months to come, and Teddy moaning in his pain."

It was a hard case, and the poor little maid's heart misgave her.

"God will not let us starve. There must be some way out of this trouble," she said; but when at the end of a week there came no solution to the difficult problem, and the tea and toast came to an untimely end, and there was not a loaf of the one nor a crust of the other in the house, Ellen, gathering courage from the very desperation of the circumstances surrounding her, told her story to a lady of whose abounding charities she had heard.

Mrs. Bruce listened, assured of the truthfulness of the narration, and sent Ellen home with a little basket well filled, promising to follow it up with a few more bulky articles. Immediately after Ellen's departure, Mrs. Bruce donned her bonnet, and went out to call upon Mrs. Cameron, whom she found in the midst of the week's ironing, smoothing out the children's aprons with an energy that bespoke a deter-

mination to do her duty at whatever expense of bodily fatigue.

"Will you come into the kitchen?" she said. "I've been too busy to keep the parlor fire going. I'm my own Bridget now. My last girl became so unsteady I was forced to send her away. I assure you I don't get much time to be idle. You'll excuse me if I go on with these aprons?"

"Do you think," said Mrs. Bruce, smiling, "that there is economy in your method of management?"

"Economy!" repeated Mrs. Cameron, in amazement that even so old a friend as Mrs. Bruce dare question her system of household management. "I don't know what you mean. I save a girl's wages, I expect; no inconsiderate item in these days of exorbitant charges."

"Yes, you save perhaps twelve dollars a month: that is to say, you do not pay that amount to a servant; but are you not cheating yourself out of much more than that sum at the same time? Pardon me if I speak plainly. If you were really too poor to keep help, it would be different; but I happen to know that your husband is doing a good business, and that he is not in favor of your shutting yourself up in this kitchen, and drudging from morning till night."

Mrs. Cameron set down her *smoothing-iron*.

"James is continually threatening to send me out a candidate," said she, "but I can't endure the thought of seeing a green hand about."

"You owe some duty to yourself," continued Mrs. Bruce, "to your husband and to your children; duties which cannot be performed while your hands are continually filled with broom or duster, saucepan or *smoothing-iron*. Who is to form and mould the habits, and direct the thoughts of your little ones, if you are never at liberty to give them your attention? Your duty to your husband is not performed in the highest sense of the word, when you have sewed on his buttons and given him a well-cooked dinner. You have no time, or you are too tired, to give him the sympathy he needs, and thus the pleasant evenings, to which he has looked forward through a long day of business perplexities, brings him no pleasant home cheer, and he feels the disappointment acutely. The duties you owe yourself are neither few nor light-

ly to be esteemed. Before your marriage you were fond of music. I remember you were a fine performer. I'll warrant you haven't opened your piano in months."

"No, that I haven't," laughed Mrs. Cameron. "I don't think I've as much as touched it since Willie was born, except to dust it. It is nonsense to talk of my keeping up practice with three children to look after."

"It is not nonsense," urged Mrs. Bruce; "and the three children, so far from being considered a hindrance to your further improvement, should only urge you to renewed effort. Not to present any higher consideration, you would not like to have your children grow up feeling that their mother could not sympathize with them in their pursuits?"

"I've often thought," said Mrs. Cameron, reflectively, "that I'd like to retain sufficient knowledge of music to teach Julia, at least the rudiments."

"Very good," nodded Mrs. Bruce; "and wouldn't your husband like a sweet song now and then? Wouldn't it freshen you up, after the duties of the day, when the children are all safely tucked up in bed, to sit down and play a few simple pieces?"

"Yes, if I could ever find the time! James used to be fond of music. But there is always a basketful of mending to be done, and I reserve that for my evening's work. Children's clothes wear out so fast, you know; and they are constantly tearing or ripping their garments. Dear me! No, it is impossible to keep up the pursuits of our girlhood after marriage."

"Not if you had a little good help," suggested Mrs. Bruce.

"Good help!" cried Mrs. Cameron; "that's just what is needed, and what I can't procure. Now my last girl—"

"Had a sick father and brother," said Mrs. Bruce; "and because of her very natural and commendable solicitude for them, she gained your disapprobation, and was sent away just when you needed her, and when her wages, being the sole support of her family, were most needed at home."

"I didn't know they were so badly off. How did you discover it?"

"I have seen Ellen to-day. They are quite destitute—had nothing to eat all day yesterday. The two invalids are suffering for medical attendance as well as for nour-

ishing food. I have sent them temporary relief, and then came to consult with you."

"Dear me! What can I do? I never thought they were so poor!"

"I thought of getting up a subscription. You can aid me with that. They must have coal, flour, and several other things; and a doctor must be sent at once. You can employ Ellen again. She will be glad to come."

"I'm sure I should be glad to have her back again. I was hasty that morning, and hardly thought she'd take me at my word. But she left, and never returned; and I've felt ever since as if the whole tribe of hired help was but a weariness and vexation, and I should be better off without any of it. Let Ellen come back, by all means; and here's five dollars towards your subscription."

Mrs. Cameron was, as she confessed, hasty, apt to act upon the impulse of the moment, let that impulse be right or wrong. Thanks to Mrs. Bruce, she was now actuated by nobler and better feelings, and she set to work with her old energy to repair the wrong she had thoughtlessly committed.

Ellen was again installed in the kitchen, and her parents and Teddy made comfortable, and insured against want. A trusty nurse was engaged to attend the children, and under the supervision of the mother herself, the little wild "olive branches" were gradually brought under much needed subjection.

A few evenings after, as Mr. Cameron traversed the neatly-gravelled walk leading to his own door, he distinctly heard the sound of music from his wife's long-neglected piano.

"Have we company, I wonder?" he asked himself, as, ascending to the piazza, he glanced through the long French windows. The room was well lighted, a cosy fire glowed in the grate, and there, before the open piano, making such music as he had not heard for years, sat his wife.

"What does it mean?" queried the astonished husband, making his way close beside his wife before she perceived him. "My dear Amelia, I am at a loss to know what is going to happen!"

"I don't wonder you are astonished," she replied. "It's so long since I touched the piano, I was almost frightened when I attempted it; but I find I can play a few

of the old songs you used to like so well, and, I think, for to-night, I'll banish the mending-basket, and give you a little music, for a change."

"A good idea, my dear, and one I heartily approve. But what have you been doing to yourself?—you look as young and pretty as when you were a girl. I could swear you'd gone back ten years since morning."

"Only a little attention to my dress, and my hair arranged in a little different style," said Mrs. Cameron, blushing like the girl to whom he likened her. "The fact is, James, I begin to see I've been expending my energy in the wrong direction. Ellen can do the cooking with far less trouble than it cost me, and in so doing earn a sum which will keep her family from want. Nurse can take care of the children, and so win her way in the world, while I can oversee them both, and yet find time to make myself more of a companion for you; and henceforth I hope the sound of a piano in your own parlor will not be a thing so unusual as to cause you any uneasiness."

Mrs. Cameron kept her word, and it was easy to see from her husband's eagerness to get home of an evening, that something pleasant was awaiting him in his cosy little parlor. The children improved in manners and morals, and the maids declared their intention of remaining with their mistress as long as she should choose to require their services.

MRS. DACRE'S TACTICS.

BY DORA DALE.

MRS. DACRE was furious!

Of course, she knew very well that it was a decided *betise* on her part, and to do *la belle madame* justice she was rarely guilty of such indiscretion as to honestly and frankly lose her temper. But, after all her plans, to be frustrated in this fashion! It was certainly abominable, and she was in a regular passion.

"I never knew anything so unfortunate," said she, in an angry whisper to her lord and master—poor Harry Dacre, the most amiable and henpecked of husbands—"what on earth has possessed Ethel Martindale to leave Newport and come to Lake George at this season? I thought we were safe for a few weeks at least; that woman is my positive horror."

"I think I've heard you say so before, my dear," said Harry, rather mischievously for him.

"Extremely possible," said she, snubbing him instantly. "But can't you see how excessively *mal-apropos* her arrival is? With all my efforts for six months past I have never yet been able to persuade Philip to avoid her. If they are in the same room no mortal power can keep him away from the back of her chair. I have no patience with him!"

"So I see," *sotto voce*.

"And you know how it is in regard to Cora Ormsby," Mrs. Dacre went on, "young, beautiful, an heiress—what more would the unreasonable man have? Especially as Philip has nothing but his profession, and owes it to society to marry a fortune. Do you think he admires her?"

"Certainly, my dear," assented the husband.

"And here I flattered myself that everything was *en train* for a brilliant match, and that Philip Neville would be caught at last. Ethel Martindale is a designing creature!"

You should have heard Mrs. Dacre's emphasis upon the last word; the hiss of a rattlesnake would have been mild in comparison. Good-natured Harry twisted himself uneasily in his chair as he recognized it.

"Don't be venomous, Lottie," said he.

"You may be making a mountain out of a very little thing. Miss Cora—"

"Taking my name in vain, Mr. Dacre?" said a girl's fresh bright voice behind the

pair. "Mr. Neville, ask your brother what treason he was meditating."

"Speak for yourself, Hal," said the gentleman thus appealed to.

Harry looked wicked. "Mrs. Dacre and I were only wondering where you and Phil had been all the evening."

"Fie!" said his better half, in a tone of honeyed sweetness, as she saw Cora color brilliantly. "I suppose you found it too warm for dancing, and was saying as much to Harry. You don't seem to care for dancing now, Philip."

"I am getting too stout," said he, lightly. "I shall take to Banting right away. Miss Cora, it's so warm in doors, will you not go out again?"

"I hear the stages," said his sister, rising. "Give me your arm, Philip."

"Any one coming that we know?" asked Neville, carelessly, as they walked down the hall.

Mrs. Dacre had no time for a response, had she been so minded, for as they came full into the light, a slight elegant figure stood in the path, and a clear sweet voice said surprisedly:

"Mr. Neville—who ever dreamed of finding you at the Lake?"

"Or of your leaving Newport?" he said, unmistakable pleasure in his handsome eyes. "I was thinking of you and last winter only to-day. Miss Martindale, let me present you to Miss Cora Ormsby."

Pretty Cora blushed, as she acknowledged the introduction, for the soft, steady violet eyes turned full upon her with the keen, penetrating glance that was one of Ethel's peculiarities, as she offered her hand, kindly.

"I think I have heard Kate Harcourt speak of you," she said.

"My Cousin Kate! O yes—this for her sake, please," and up went the pretty plump arm about Ethel's neck, and the sweet girlish lips touched her cheek. Ethel smiled involuntarily as she returned the kiss.

"What a charming *rencontre*," said Mrs. Dacre, with her faint sneer. "Cora, my love, are you swearing eternal friendship to Miss Martindale?"

But the shot glanced harmlessly off Cora. For she answered, in perfect good faith:

"I am sure that Miss Martindale and I will become very good friends if she will permit it."

And Ethel's ancient antagonist saw the droll smile that lit her violet eyes as she turned toward her.

"I presume you are not surprised at seeing me here, Mrs. Dacre," she said, pointedly. "I wrote Aunt Pomeroy two days ago to engage a room for me. I left Newport because I was unlucky enough to take a very bad cold, and the doctor ordered me inland immediately."

"You are looking very thin and ill," said Mrs. Dacre, amiably. "But perhaps that is owing to your dancing so much. What would you do without excitement? You will find Lake George shockingly dull."

"Miss Ethel is enough of a good Samaritan to be happy in making others so," said Philip, gallantly. It was wicked, perhaps, but a glance of the most mischievous, merriest fun flashed from his eyes down into Ethel's, and Mrs. Dacre was keen enough to read the message in its transit over the telegraphic wires, and registered another to the long list of Miss Martindale's transgressions.

"I see my aunt looking helplessly this way," said Ethel. "Shall I see you at the nine o'clock breakfast? Good-night, Miss Ormsby; you and I will get better acquainted to-morrow," and with a slight bow to Mrs. Dacre, Miss Martindale's graceful figure passed up the staircase.

"That was a small passage of arms for the beginning," said Ethel, to herself, as she drew the bolt of her door. "I wonder why Mrs. Dacre cannot be induced to let me alone. The most comical feature of our combats is that Mr. Neville frequently appreciates the shots. Mrs. Dacre must feel it very ungrateful of him to hoist my colors. What a pretty child Cora Ormsby is. Warm-hearted little thing! she will creep into my heart before I know it. Heart!" and she smiled involuntarily at her own reflection in the glass. "I wonder what business I have to remember that I possess such a commodity. I am certainly growing old, and as my friend Mrs. Dacre says, *thin*. Rather a contrast to that pretty child down stairs. She has a face fit for a fairy queen; I think I must cultivate little Cora." And then, as she let down her long chestnut hair, Ethel looked again in the glass and found that her eyes were brimming with tears.

"Very silly of me," said she, essaying a smile. "The truth is I am weak after my

long illness. I don't think I should have come here had I known that party were to be encountered; and yet, if Philip—" but here Ethel blew out her candle and finished her meditations in darkness.

Ethel Martindale was twenty-six. I am aware that it is frightfully impolite for me to introduce a heroine above the orthodox age of eighteen, but such was the melancholy fact. Moreover, Ethel at twenty-six was far more worthy of admiration than Ethel at eighteen. Whatever that woman did, she did well, a sort of natural aptitude for success that was, in itself, a talent. You never would call her handsome; her only points of real beauty being her eyes and figure. The former were a rare shade of violet, with lashes so long and curling that in moments of emotion almost made the eyes themselves look black. Her figure was matchless; add to this charm the very unusual one (in American women) of walking easily and well, and you have all Ethel's physical attractions. But she possessed (what very few beautiful women cultivate or appreciate the value of) the subtle art of adapting herself to people with rarely erring tact, and in addition to being a brilliant conversationalist, she had the more difficult accomplishment of listening well.

A night's rest certainly worked wonders with Ethel's cheeks, for when she walked in to breakfast the next morning she was looking her best. The fresh, modish white dress with its violet ribbons, a shade lighter than her eyes, set off her clear skin and chestnut hair to admirable advantage, and even Cora's bright young beauty could not detract from the simple elegance of her new friend.

"I wish I could steal her figure," thought Mrs. Dacre, over her coffee cup. "No make-up there! How idiotically pleased Philip is looking. Of course he's just fool enough to do anything in that woman's hands, and she's clever enough to make him." With which involuntary tribute to Ethel's powers, Mrs. Dacre smiled sweetly on her "horror," and bade her an amiable good-morning.

Breakfast was a merry meal for all of them, and watchful as she was, Mrs. Dacre could detect nothing unusual in Ethel's manner toward her brother. She treated him with the ease of an old friend, nothing more. Still, the absence of any ground for her suspicions had no quieting effect on Mrs. Dacre's nerves, for when the party rose and declared their intention of going out to play at ten-

pins, she pursued her system of espionage by going also. And when they finally arrived at the bowling-alley, she contrived to place Ethel against her brother by declaring that two such good players must not play together. Ethel acquiesced with entire good breeding, and they began the game.

Now, certainly, if she had but paused to think, it was very ill-judged in Mrs. Daere to induce her brother to play opposite Ethel, for it gave him an excellent opportunity of chatting with her when the others were playing, and also left him free to admire the swift sure ball that the delicate wrist sent with such certain aim, and the lithe pliant figure that always would be graceful, while Cora and Mrs. Daere (both pretty women) were curving and twisting themselves awkwardly enough in their endeavors to persuade the balls not to roll off into the gutters. Certainly this was trying; and before they had gotten more than half way through the game Mrs. Daere prepared to be as stingingly disagreeable as in her lay. So she walked over where Ethel and Mr. Neville were standing.

"How many have you made, Miss Martindale?" she asked.

"Eighty-nine on my half-string," said Ethel, picking out a ball and poising it carefully in her hand before playing. "We are twenty pins ahead of you, Mr. Neville."

"How beautifully you roll," said Mrs. Daere, as somebody proclaimed another ten-strike for Ethel. "O, take care! you have dropped one of those elegant topaz buttons."

Ethel started.

"Have I? O, I hope it is not broken! Thank you, Mr. Neville; no, it's quite unhurt."

"I noticed them at breakfast," said Mrs. Daere. "It's very odd. I do believe I've seen some like them before. Was it at Ball, Black's or Tiffany's?"

"Neither," said Ethel, coldly, fastening the button. It was a very beautiful one, set in frosted gold, extremely unique and of value.

"O, then they were gifts?" pursued the fair questioner, with rather more eagerness than was altogether polite.

"Not a gift," said Ethel, with a vain endeavor to conquer a smile as she caught Neville's eye. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Daere, but it's your turn to bowl."

"Humph!" quoth the baffled lady, rather at a loss whether to be offended or not, as she walked off to her place in the alley.

"Bravo!" said Mr. Neville's voice in Ethel's ear, as he passed her, looking the very per-

sonification of merry mischief. Mrs. Daere had almost scented out the secret, the fact being that Ethel had won the sleeve-buttons in a bet with Mr. Neville at the Saratoga races. In one of Mrs. Lottie's peregrinations around her brother's room she had chanced to light upon the case that contained them, they having been carelessly left upon his dressing-table before sending off. It was one of his sister's peculiarities to lay such items away in her memory and reproduce them in startling ways, like the present. She thought she recognized the buttons, and with a nervous hand she might have found out all about it by pure impudence. But Ethel was so aggravatingly cool; and although Mrs. Daere was morally persuaded that Philip was at the bottom of it, she certainly had not a scrap of evidence to go upon a proof.

After bowling was over Philip was seized with a desperate desire to hear Ethel sing, and said more pressing things in supplication than Mrs. Daere thought at all needful.

"You are surely aware how much I dislike to sing in a public parlor," said Ethel, at last. Then she happened to catch a glimpse of Mrs. Daere's face, and her mischievous imp made her add, "But I'll sell my song—for a consideration!"

"And that is—"

"That you write a poem for me, as you used to last year."

They had fallen a step behind the others, and Philip's reply was too low for even Mrs. Daere's keen ears. "Have I altered so much from what I was then that you doubt my willingness to attend to your slightest wish?" he said, reproachfully.

"Philip," said his sister, from the top of the piazza steps, "I wish you would get that book you gave me to read yesterday. Of all the odd books—have you seen it, Miss Martindale?"

"What?" asked Ethel, seating herself in the chair Philip rolled up for her.

"The new novel that every one is talking of, 'Raymonds.'"

"I have seen it," she said, quietly. Neville walked off for the book.

"Isn't she pretty?" said Mrs. Daere in a whisper, with a glance behind them.

"Cora? Yes, lovely," said Ethel, warmly. "It's more than mere prettiness."

"It is comical to see her with Philip," said Mrs. Daere, in her confidential undertone. "His amusement at her girlish ways has become open admiration. Those men of the

world are so apt to be bewitched with utter guiltlessness like Cora's; the entire freedom from any attempt to 'catch' them. And Cora is in every way so eligible, and we all are very much pleased—but what am I saying! Philip would be so displeased with me for hinting—"

"Your sisterly anxiety is very pardonable," said Ethel, with the curl of her lip that Mrs. Dacre knew so well, and in spite of her impudence was half afraid of. And so she was relieved to find Philip at the back of her chair.

"That is a most singular book," said she, addressing the company generally. "For my part I don't like it at all."

"Why?" asked her brother, turning over the leaves.

"It's founded upon an absurd idea of women. Don't you think it's overdrawn and unnatural, Miss Martindale?"

"It never struck me so, Mrs. Dacre, not more than the generality of novels. All women are not born to live in the sunshine. I can fancy a fine sensitive character sacrificing itself in that way. The book ends well (the author allowed the orthodox idea of the law of compensation to govern him in the closing chapter), but still I think it would be truer to nature—to that particular woman's nature, I mean—if she had lived out her life alone."

"I agree with your theory," said Philip, smiling, "but—pardon me—I do believe that when it came to practice a woman would be sufficiently inconsistent to consent to be happy. Set aside the story, the book is exquisitely written; some passages are wonderful. It is receiving favorable notice from the highest sources in the literary world. Do you think it was written by a man or a woman?"

"A man," said his sister.

"A woman," cried Cora.

"Did you say a man?" asked Neville, bending over Ethel's chair.

"I don't think the question ever occurred to me. No, a woman, I should say, decidedly."

He gave her an odd look, and then opening the book, he read steadily for half an hour, criticising with keen point and much praise as he read. The carmine tints grew deeper in Ethel's cheeks, and when, after reading a pathetic part, he closed the book, Cora's eyes were full to overflowing, and Ethel's own were dewy.

"You've made me cry, Mr. Neville," said pretty Cora, indignantly.

He threw down the book with a smile. "Forgive me. It was the author's fault, not mine."

"I don't like it," said Mrs. Dacre, breaking her worsted needle in her energetic protest.

"A man convinced against his will—isn't a circumstance to a woman in that position," said her brother, laughing outright. "Miss Ethel, it's time for your song."

"You haven't redeemed your promise," said she, laying down her work.

"You mean to drive a bargain then, as you said? Mrs. Browning used to be a favorite of yours, Miss Martindale; *apropos de rien*, do you happen to remember this fragment?"

"Sweet, thou hast trod on a heart;
Pass! there's a world full of men,
And women as fair as thou art
Must do such things now and then.

"Thou only hast stopped unaware,
Malice not one can impute;
And why should a heart have been there
In the way of a fair woman's foot?"

"It was not a stone that could trip,
Nor was it a thorn that could rend;
Put up thy proud upper lip,
'Twas merely the heart of a friend!"

The end of the poem has escaped me, Miss Ethel."

Mrs. Dacre's foxlike eyes were on her face, and Ethel would not have changed color or faltered for worlds. So she answered very composedly:

"I wonder why men always war with women for being proud. Sometimes we are so situated that we can be nothing else and retain our self-respect. Mrs. Browning brings the proper retribution, however, Mr. Neville. The end of that poem assures us that she would

"—sigh very like, on her part,
Of all I have known or can know,
I wish I had only that heart
I trod upon years ago!"

She said it so very naturally, with such entire absence of any consciousness, that Philip thought for one moment that he had been misunderstood. But as the others walked off, just for one brief flash he caught the look of her eyes.

"You wrote that book," he said, softly. "It is worthy of you; a noble story."

The quick warm color flashed into Ethel's face. Every word of his praise was so dear to her.

"Do not betray me just now," she said,

hastily. "I am glad—so very glad—that you like it." And as she walked with her graceful, regal step towards the piano, Philip's thoughts wandered off into the region of possibilities; and then he woke to realities again, and heard Ethel's pure, exquisite voice singing through the refrain,

"For men must work, and women must weep!"

"But the weeping shall not be yours, my darling," he thought; and Mrs. Daere, turning, demanded why he was so *distracted*. As for Ethel, she felt as if she was walking in a dream. Her literary success was dear, very dear to her heart, but that was a mere nothing compared with the knowledge that the man she loved was almost won.

But Mrs. Daere's propensities for mischief-making were manifold! it almost seemed as if she were gifted with clairvoyance. She shot so many darts at Ethel that she roused her pride, and made her perfectly unapproachable toward Philip. A man will not endure that sort of thing patiently for any length of time, and so, alas! Mrs. Daere found it. They had made up a party to go to Bolton and take a late dinner; an expedition that Mrs. Daere had been talking of ever since they had come to the Lake. A number of friends from New York had arrived, and the party grew to such size that Philip proposed they should charter the little propeller. "And I shall take my own boat," added he; "it will be convenient as a resort for smoking when you ladies get tired of us."

The day was a lovely one. Mrs. Daere was never more amiably disposed toward society in general, having just eased her mind by sending some poisoned shafts at Ethel, and seeing her handsome brother stretched out on a cushion at Cora's feet, she felt quite approving. They had a merry sail going over, and stepped off on the Bolton dock in the highest spirits. Mr. Daere's plans for their amusement were carried out successfully, though his charming wife continued to make several of the party thoroughly uncomfortable. Cora, to her own discontent, was, by Mrs. Daere's generalship, coaxed into a boat with Mr. Neville, when they all rowed about looking for pond-lilies, and was a shade less pleasing than usual because Thome Lindsay was Ethel's cavalier. Nor was it much better at dinner, when Mr. Lindsay saw fit to take possession of a chair next to Miss Martindale. Pretty Cora was as near being sulky as her sunny temper admitted of, and in private anathematized Mrs. Daere

unmercifully. But the dinner came to an end in due time, and the party prepared for the lovely moonlight sail home.

Philip was a trifle behind the others with Harry Daere, but he quickened his steps as he saw the ladies going on board, intending to ask Ethel to go a part of the way, at least, in his little boat.

"Miss Ethel," said he, hurriedly, bounding on the narrow plank, "will you try—good heavens! take care!" for Ethel, turning hastily to see who it was, lost her balance and slipped off into the water.

There rose a simultaneous shriek from five female voices as they saw her fall, but the water not being much above her waist, Ethel floundered helplessly for a moment, and then stood still, saying:

"Much obliged, Mr. Neville. Now suppose you contrive to pull me out."

His arm was around her, and his hand closed firmly on hers, as she spoke.

"What an awkward brute I am," he said, speaking lightly, because he saw that her lips were white, and for a moment she had been dreadfully frightened. "Harry, let Miss Ethel step into my boat, it will be easier for her. Gently; there, you're all right now; but I have to beg you to forgive me."

He could feel the slight form tremble as he lifted her up, and then Mrs. Daere and company rushed on shore and laid hands upon her as she stepped from the boat.

"Dry clothes," said Ethel, laughing. "Where upon earth am I to get them, Mrs. Daere? I shall not take cold from such a little wetting—on a summer evening, too. Aunt Pomeroy, you're not to scold! Give me all the shawls you can spare, and let me sit on deck until I'm dry."

"Are you crazy?" asked Mrs. Daere.

"I hope not," said she, with a smile.

"I shall administer a glass of brandy," said Philip, glancing at her white face, as she passively allowed him to wrap her in a shawl. "I was the cause of the misstep and I shall play physician. When you fell I was in the act of asking you to go in my boat, and let the propeller tow us back. After the brandy has been taken, I'll wrap you up warmly among the cushions and engage to bring you home safely."

He spoke with easy assurance for the benefit of the whole company, but with a sort of gentle decision that made his sister's heart sink. As for Ethel, she yielded, taking the brandy, and submitting to be placed in the

little boat. And presently they were all off, and Philip sitting at her side—not too near, for they were in sight of the others though out of earshot.

"And now, Ethel, will you listen to me?" asked Philip, in a low tone of deep feeling. I think Ethel would not repeat to you what he said, but she felt as if the world, Mrs. Dacre, and all disagreeables were very far distant; that the gleaming of the water, the little gliding boat, the quiet clasp in which one of her hands lay, were the only links between the dream and the reality. But suddenly she remembered that he must be answered.

"Don't you think it will be a very bad thing for you?" she asked, simply.

He laughed a little. "How so? If you love me, Ethel, why should we live apart?" He was answered in the eloquent glance of the violet eyes, the rush of crimson that dyed her face.

"But you are not rich," she urged. "You have only your profession, and you work hard at that. Would not a wife be a burden to you, Philip? one that you could ill afford? Unless she were wealthy—like Cora." She bent toward him a trifle eagerly, trying to read his face in the dim light. When his answer came it was very quietly spoken.

"My dear child, do you know what nonsense you are talking? Am I not the best judge whether it is easier to work hard without you, or to work for you? Cora is a pretty creature, and Lottie has tormented me enough with her, heaven knows. I was going to Newport to find you, if you had not happened to come here—don't you believe me, dear? What sort of a poor man's wife will you make, love?"

She looked up at him; tears bright as diamonds hung on her long lashes, and her lips quivered with the sweetest, most unselfish joy she had ever known.

"I shall not play that role just yet, Philip, and perhaps Mrs. Dacre herself may be reconciled when she finds that I am my Uncle Jeffrey's sole heiress. I'm ashamed to say how much it is."

"It's worse than little Cora!" quoth Philip, with a stare of amazement. "And I have wooed a fortune, after all."

"Yes," she answered, softly, watching his changing handsome face. "The news, very fortunately, did not travel before me. I should not otherwise have allowed you to—" She paused, scarlet!

"To love you, I suppose," said he, with praiseworthy gravity.

"At any rate, you seemed resigned to the dreadful tidings," she retorted. "You even thought it necessary to duck me in the lake before coming to the point."

"Don't scold," said he, maliciously. "As for the ducking—doesn't this compensate?" And Ethel was effectually put to confusion.

The next day happened to be Sunday, and Mrs. Dacre made her appearance at church time in a very unamiable frame of mind. Her disgust at the proceedings of the previous evening was such that she could hardly look with decent civility at Ethel. And when she saw Philip join Miss Martindale Mrs. Lottie nearly strangled with rage.

"Good-morning, Miss Martindale," said she. "I hardly expected to see you out of your room to-day. So imprudent of you to sit in the night air in that boat. But then Philip is fascinating in his talks *a deux*. I suppose I need hardly ask if you enjoyed your trip yesterday?"

"Which part of it, madam?" asked Ethel, with admirable breeding. Philip gave his sister a glance—a very swift one, but it silenced her.

"I have a piece of news for you, Lottie," he began, with a curious quizzical smile, but his brother-in-law came up, and so Philip left the sentence unfinished, and walked on to join Cora and Ethel. In church they were fortunate enough to find seats together, and Cora kept up an animated whisper with Philip until service began, to which Ethel's cheeks responded by becoming scarlet. By the time they stood up to read the Psalter, Mrs. Dacre was in a perfect fever. What with Cora's evidently ecstatic state, and poor Ethel's blushes, "my Lady Tartuffe" was more puzzled than she ever had been before. What if Philip had proposed to Cora! he was such a flirt—there was no telling. And as they sat down she stole a glance at his imperturbable face. He smiled as he caught her eye, and taking up his prayer-book wrote a line or two on the fly-leaf. Was it for her? Yes; and opening the book eagerly she read:

"Pray congratulate Ethel; she is old Mr. Jeffrey's heiress, and the author of 'Raymonds'; *you had best add a sister's greetings!*"

Mrs. Dacre very nearly screamed. She almost gasped, "Is it true?" as she glanced at the three faces. Philip gave a little nod, Cora strangled her laugh in her prayer-book, and Ethel looked solemnly straight before her

as the sole means of preserving her gravity. I think Mrs. Dacre had never come so near stupefaction in her life. The woman whom she had persistently annoyed and insulted for two seasons was actually the owner of that fortune—"fabulously rich," thought she. "How could I have been such a fool?" And dear Philip, she always knew he would marry a fortune. He might talk of not caring for money, but he had kept this knowledge very close—yes, he knew what he was about. And Ethel was—well! perhaps she was mistaken in not thinking her handsome; very distinguished looking—and her poses were superb. To think that Philip had done his duty at last! This, and much more, Mrs. Dacre pondered during service, and when Ethel and Philip walked into Aunt Pomeroy's parlor on going home they found Mrs. Lottie there waiting for them.

"My dear, dear Ethel!" cried the gushing lady, every other word in italics. "I am so surprised! How could you let Philip tell me in that dreadfully sudden way—just like a novel. And that beautiful book! I must read it again, I read it too hastily, I fear. And how did you settle it? For I've been

expecting this for a long time. Philip, you sly fellow, I suspected you!"

For a second Ethel thought she would resent this, but Philip's dancing eyes, and the comical suddenness of Mrs. Dacre's recantation proved too much for her risibles. So she answered, with a smile:

"It's very pleasant not to have taken you by surprise. How did we settle it? He pushed me into the lake, and when I was in a half-drowned condition he made me say—what, Philip?"

"Nothing, so far as I can remember," said Philip, with great demureness.

"And what did Master Philip say?" questioned Mrs. Dacre, in high glee.

"Told me I talked nonsense," with a merry laugh. "I think he's dangerously wicked, Mrs. Dacre."

What Mrs. Lottie answered the historian knoweth not, but you may rest assured that every one of her "dear five hundred" friends in town were confidentially informed that "Philip never would have got her, my dear creature, if I had not assisted him with a true woman's style of TACTICS!"

MRS. DALRYMPLE'S GOVERNESS.

Brown, Lottie

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MRS. DALRYMPLE'S GOVERNESS.

BY LOTTIE BROWN.

It was an elegant room, a study in itself to any beauty worshipper. The curtains and carpet were a perfect match, and the furniture just unlike enough to harmonize. Every picture had its just amount of light and shadow, and each vase and knickknack was scattered in good taste.

Mrs. Dalrymple prided herself upon her establishment, and it was an oft-repeated boast, that she never had a person or article in her house having no claim to beauty. She was pretty herself, her children were pretty, her friend Agatha a beauty, the servants fair and neat, and her governess as handsome as a governess need be.

They were all in the parlor one bright October afternoon, enjoying themselves with perfect freedom, as every member of this model household was allowed to do. Mrs. Dalrymple was crocheting worsted. Agatha Canton was lying on the sofa, her arms wreathed gracefully above her head, chatting in her charming nonsensical manner. Master Rupert and Miss Belle were playing, the one with mamma's ottoman for a carriage and the piano-stool for a horse, the other keeping house in a bay window, with a huge doll and mamma's work basket. Miss Vane the governess was in one corner, in the shadow of a curtain, sewing on some dainty

light work. There was not a fairer face in the room, but its pensive melancholy expression, was perhaps a degree less attractive than the blonde beauty of Agatha Canton.

Miss Vane's face was a clear marble white, with heavy waves of dusky hair, sweeping away back from the broad low forehead. Her eyes were dark—black sometimes, at others a clear deep hazel—with long lashes casting a shadow upon the colorless cheek. The mouth and chin were beautiful. One with full red lips, slightly yet pleasantly curved, had in it a temptation which had I been a man I could never have resisted. The other was round and firm, with a delicate line of decision marking it. Taking the face as a whole, it was a wonderful one. Even Agatha had said so, when Mrs. Dalrymple engaged her, and added, with a shrug of her plump shoulders, that she had no doubt but that the poor weak-minded lady would repent having ever introduced her into her family.

Miss Vane had been an inmate of the house just three months, and each day Mrs. Dalrymple was heard to declare, that there was not another governess like her in the city. On this particular afternoon Miss Agatha was, as I have before said, talking nonsense, and it ran thus:

"I think I shall marry Clark Estes. He has got money, and the finest villa on the Hudson. What do you say, Clara?"

"Has he proposed?" queried Clara Dalrymple, arching her pretty brows.

"No, but don't he call regularly each day, and bring bouquets? What is that for?"

"Now-a-days with husband hunters it means marriage; with you and me it should mean nothing. Why, Clark asked with real tenderness for Miss Vane yesterday, and this morning sent her a fine volume of poems. What do you now think?"

Miss Canton shot an angry glance at the drooping figure opposite, and said in a low voice:

"I think her a bold creature to accept a present from one so little known to her."

The governess heard every syllable, as the rising color betrayed, and turning her large eyes upon her fair face, she asked:

"Are you certain, Miss Canton, that I accepted Mr. Estes's gift?"

"Of course not. But I presume you did."

"Then it is indeed presumption. I returned the work not an hour since." And the girl, with unruffled brow and smiling lips, went on with her sewing.

The laws of politeness governed the life of Miss Agatha, otherwise she would have struck her, when she dared accuse her of presumption. She, a paid servant of her friend, daring to lift her eyes to one so far above her! The round cheek was crimson, and the blue eyes shot scathing glances to that shadowed corner.

"The impertinent hussy!"

"Stop, Agatha! For my part I am glad of it," said Mrs. Dalrymple.

"O Clara!"

"I am. She shows you your place, better than any one else would dared to have done."

"Only my equals can do that, Clara."

"Equals! Shades of our plebeian forefathers? You'll never see the day, Agatha Canton, that you can equal my governess in mental and moral acquirements. You can wear a better quality of silk than she, and sport a set of diamonds, but it is due to no wonderful powers of your own that you can do so. You may thank your grandfather, who worked for nine shillings per day, as a machinist, and to your father who, inheriting his father's industrious habits, worked himself into the great iron foundry, now known as Canton & Co."

"Don't, Clara! She will hear you. Let us go back to Clark Estes. He has said remarkably sweet things to me. But if I don't have him, why—"

"There's my matchless brother. Poor Gerald!"

Mrs. Dalrymple's eyes grew wet, and Agatha in her wild impulsive way sprang up and kissed her.

"Don't, Clara! You make me wretched!"

At such times the bonds of friendship strengthened between these two. Clara Dalrymple, widowed and lonely, loved sympathy, as do the rest of us, and Agatha knew how to offer it.

Besides, she was along a good step in her twenties, and no one had the slightest claim upon her. It would be terrible to be an old maid, and yet how close that dreaded existence seemed.

Gerald Kavanagh had oceans of money, was as handsome as her hero need be, and as for talent, all her world acknowledged that he possessed a trifle more than his share. Clark Estes was her mantle. She wore him to hide the fact that she intended to marry Gerald Kavanagh, as soon as she found the opportunity. She intended to show her world this, when Gerald came home from Cuba.

The surest channel to his heart lay through his sister. Agatha knew it, and hence these fond kisses and embraces.

"Clark Estes is coming, mamma!" called Belle, from the window.

"Shall we retire, Miss Vane?" asked Agatha, saucily.

"I beg you to suit your convenience," replied the governess.

Again the steel blue eyes snapped.

"You may as well be quiet, Aggie. Nothing can be gained by taunting her. She is more than a match for you."

"Good afternoon, ladies! Ah, *ma petite Belle!* How gay you all look. There is Miss Vane!" The handsome dashing intruder passed the languid Agatha and bent gracefully over the slight figure of the governess.

"You sent back my gift, Miss Vane. How could you! Will you not accept it as a token of friendship? I will ask no more." He laid a parcel in her lap.

In his face there beamed the three highest tributes a man can pay a woman, love, honor and respect, and Agatha, seeing all this, caught her friend's arm.

"You will take it?" he pleaded, as she lifted her eyes. "Only as a gift from a true friend."

A friend! The full meaning of the word flashed upon her. A full sense of the bitterness of friendlessness seemed for the moment to overwhelm her, and with swimming eyes she clasped the volume and bowed.

His delicacy came at once to her relief, and with a gay, forced laugh he turned again to Mrs. Dalrymple and entered into conversation.

"A pretty scene truly!" sneered Agatha, as Rupert for a few moments monopolized his attention. "I dare say your brother will also fall in love with her."

"Don't be silly."

Why should he not? She was handsome and educated. She talked little, and was graceful and womanly, but then—Gerald Kavanagh had caught some patrician notions in his travels. His first wife had noble blood in her veins, she had heard, and he would not wed an unknown governess and give her that noble lady's place.

But she was losing her mantle. People had so long coupled her name with that of Clark Estes, that this aroused all her jealousy, and hatred. She did not want him—that is, she did not if she could ensnare Kavanagh, but she did not want him to turn from her to a laboring woman, dependent upon her hard

drudgery for her daily bread. There was where the shoe pinched!

"I hear that Gerald is on his way homeward," said Estes.

"We expect him by the first of next month."

"I shall be glad to meet him. Poor fellow, he was a perfect wreck when he went away. I hope we shall find him improved."

Presently Estes went away, with a smile of tender meaning to the lonely governess, and a gay adieu to the others.

"When are you to be married, Miss Vane?" laughed Agatha. "Allow me to congratulate you. Clark has a round half million."

"Your congratulations are unnecessary, Miss Canton."

"Humph!"

This brought the tears, but her tormentor did not see them, and in a few moments she went out and called the children after her. Then, all forgetful of the presence of Mrs. Dalrymple, the girl buried her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Why, child! Miss Vane! Poor dear! What is it?" pleaded the tender-hearted little woman, kneeling beside her. "Don't allow Agatha to annoy you."

"Mrs. Dalrymple, it is not that alone. I am so desolate, so unhappy, so utterly friendless!"

"Not while I live, poor child. I have always esteemed you as a true lady, and as a friend."

"You have been very kind; but sometimes we have sorrows which nothing can alleviate."

"You speak truly. Within the past two years I have known bitter sorrow, and not all the offerings of sympathy from kind friends could lessen a pang. The death of my husband came first; two months later, my brother with his newly-wedded wife, an English lady of beauty and worth, started for home. On the passage, the vessel was wrecked, and all save my brother and two seamen perished. He came to me almost broken-hearted, and for months I lived in constant fear for his health and reason."

"Your brother?"

"Yes, my brother, of whom we were recently speaking. His name is Gerald Kavanagh! He is well known in political circles. You may have heard of him!"

Miss Vane's answer did not come. There was a sudden movement, and when Mrs. Dalrymple saw clearly, she found her governess lying pale and lifeless upon the floor.

From the basement to the attic, Mrs. Dalrymple's house was a glare of light, and far down the street, the blinking, staring windows flashed as if some great event was in preparation. It was only her brother's welcome home she said, after his lonely wandering for two years. A heart-broken man he had left them, and standing, with her face pressed against the glass, she prayed that he might have found peace.

"Poor Gerald! Poor Gerald!" she was nervously repeating. "How I hope to find you changed. My dear, my only brother."

Once in a while she looked within. Under the gaslight by the table stood Agatha, her golden hair and brilliant complexion, rendered exquisitely fair by the flowing robe of purple silk, with its clasps and buttons of pure gold. The blue eyes were large and earnest, and glowing with eager expectation.

"A beautiful creature," thought Clara; "but can she take the lost one's place?"

A little distance on, Belle in full company dress was trying her best to obey the direction given, to sit and not disarrange her hair, but making a miserable failure, in consequence of the particular attentions of Master Rupert, who would insist upon snapping her ears, and make her tell who she loved best, by squeezing her fingers.

On the sofa, Miss Vane, in her best dress of plain black silk, with lace at the throat and wrists, was turning the leaves of a magazine, and looking unusually radiant. There was quite a pink glow on her cheeks, and her eyes were positively black as midnight.

"I hope Gerald will like her," thought the watcher at the window. "For she is a poor, lonely, homeless child."

The carriage came before these thoughts had left her mind, and in a moment a loud ring sounded through the hall.

Clara and the two children were at the door before he closed it, and with sobs and kisses the traveller was dragged into the warm parlor. Tall and handsome as a prince he looked, standing there with his arms around the fond sister and her children.

"My darlings! It is good to be with you once more. My old friend Agatha. This is indeed a pleasure."

And while she was smiling in his face, no one saw the black-robed figure on the sofa. Her eyes were smiling, but otherwise she was as motionless as a statue. Nobody thought of her, poor lonely one! Nobody! O yes! It was not like Clara Dalrymple to forget any

one in her happiness, and as soon as Agatha had concluded her pretty speech of welcome, she stepped forward, saying:

"Gerald, let me introduce our teacher, and my dear friend Miss Vane! My brother Mr. Kavanagh."

She was on her feet, and advancing, her lustrous eyes fastened upon his ashy face.

For a moment Clara and Agatha held their breath in wonder, then there was a cry, a rush forward, and Gerald was holding the governess in his arms, and sobbing forth like a child:

"My Edith! My wife, my darling! Thank God! Thank God!"

"Your wife! Miss Vane, is he crazy?" queried the bewildered sister.

"No, no! I am not Miss Vane, I am Edith Kavanagh!"

When the confusion subsided and crestfallen Agatha had found her smile, and Edith Vane sat at her husband's feet, she said:

"At the moment of our separation in that fearful storm, I was hurled down into the boiling waves. I was taught to swim in my younger days, and at once put forth every energy to keep afloat. My strength was nearly exhausted, when some heavy substance struck me. I caught at it, and discovered it to be a boat. I clambered into it and floated away. The next day I was picked up by an American vessel bound for New York. My sufferings had so prostrated me that I was unable to speak, and I fell at once into a lingering fever. When I recovered, I was in the city. The captain's wife insisted upon my accompanying her to her country home, and seeing no other alternative—as I was in a strange land without friends or money—I consented. I remained there until Mrs. Dalrymple's advertisement attracted my attention. She desired an unmarried lady. I thought myself a widow, and in my destitution I ventured to assume the name of Miss Vane and apply for the situation. I was successful, and I have prudently saved my earnings, hoping one day to earn sufficient to return to my country and friends. O Gerald, I did not know that you lived until your sister spoke your name a few weeks ago. I have been praying and thanking God ever since."

"My poor little wife!"

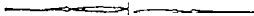
"My darling sister!" And Clara's tears fell upon the white hand of her governess.

"What will become of poor Clark?" laughed Rupert.

"He will say it is the happiest day of his life," said that individual, who had been from the first a silent observer. "It is as good as a drama!"

Agatha's heart was at low water mark, but

she threw on her mantle as well as he would allow her, and hid her disappointment. She never married, for the Hudson villa found a mistress in pretty Mrs. Dalrymple, and she gave up in despair.



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MRS. DEACON O'HARA.

BY MISS CAMILLA WILLIAN.

WHEN the Rev. Doctor Theophilus Mather's third wife died, the first thing the reverend gentleman did, after she had been decorously and solemnly buried, was, naturally enough, to look about for a successor. And on whom would his eyes more naturally light than on Mrs. O'Hara? Indeed, if I wanted to be censorious, I would say that the doctor's eyes had turned very often in that direction before the demise of the late lamented Mrs. Martha Mather. And why not? Was not Mrs. O'Hara the relief of that light of the church, Dennis O'Hara, Esquire, the most pious and irreproachable of men? And was she not herself the pink of piety, and propriety, and zeal? Of course.

This O'Hara family were, I may say here, particularly interesting to Doctor Mather's church, from the fact that they had been snatched as brands from the burning, as the saying is; in other words, had been won over from the horrors and abominations of popery, to the gospel light, and freedom, and liberty of conscience, and all that sort of thing, of the Baptist faith according to the Tight Street Church. It happened in this wise:

Miss Ellen Dermont had been educated at a convent till she was seventeen. Then, her parents becoming poor, she left and went home to them. At the age of eighteen she was an orphan, without home or money, and nothing but herself to depend on. To be sure, she had kind friends who were willing to lend her a helping hand, and she had a class of pupils on the piano, so that she could get along as well as many another. But Miss Dermont had no notion of wasting her life's young spring in toil. She had a taste for

wealth and fashion, and a decided objection to alpaca gowns and shabby gloves. So she cast about in her own mind for a better arrangement. It was not long before a bright thought struck her. In her own church, with its hoards of poor, its few rich, its many new churches and benevolent institutions building and taking all the money that could be raked and scraped, there was no one to do anything for her except give that little help which would render it necessary that she should also help herself. But in the Protestant churches it was different. There the majority were wealthy, or, at least, in comfortable circumstances, and they would be both willing and able to take care of her. She saw that nothing was so snapped at as a convert from the Catholic church, and if that convert were young and interesting, and, above all, had been in a convent, the welcome would be enthusiastic. So this excellent young manager looked about for a wealthy congregation with a good deal of theological bile in it, and, finding her game, went to see Mrs. Mather, the second wife of the reverend gentleman who had just lost his third. Such tremulous scruples as Miss Dermont had! such deep religious feeling! It was quite touching. The doctor and his wife took her up at once. They introduced her to their friends, and the young woman became a lioness of the first water. She would lose all her friends, and her employment, she said, with tears in her eyes. But what was that when it was a case of conscience? In fine, she played her cards well, and found herself an honored guest in many a wealthy house, the recipient of countless presents in dress and money, and morely playing at support-

ling herself by giving lessons to four or five pupils.

That was all very well, but she wanted more. She wanted to marry and have an establishment; and, somehow, though all the elders fussed over her, and the young people were very polite and respectful, the young men didn't propose. A religious heroine didn't seem to be their style. She cast about in her own mind, and made an advance on her plans. There was Dennis O'Hara, a born deacon, and one of her old popish adorers. She rather liked Dennis, though he wasn't rich; and why shouldn't he become rich if he would follow her lead? There was no reason why not. So she manipulated Dennis, and the first thing his friends knew, he also had the most harrowing scruples regarding popery, and had to go to Dr. Mather for ghostly counsel. This second convert was received with no less enthusiasm than the first, and was rather a feather in Miss Dermont's cap.

How interesting that the young man's affection for her should have led him to see the error of his ways, to be sure. They petted him, baptized and congratulated him, and, since by leaving the church he lost, or pretended he lost, a situation worth seven hundred a year, they gave him another worth a thousand. The young man was steady, polite and cold, and he prospered. He and Miss Dermont were married, their Baptist friends giving the wedding, and a heap of presents, and they set up housekeeping in a modest genteel way. Gradually, as time went on, they advanced. Mr. O'Hara became junior partner in the firm where he had been book-keeper, and deacon of the church, and Mrs. O'Hara was one of the shining lights in the church, prominent in prayer-meetings, where she sang delightfully, one of the most delightful gossips at sewing-circles, and the best hand in the world to buy presents for the vestry Christmas tree. She had such a taking way with her, "and her cause was so good," as she defined it, that tradesmen thought her approving smile, when they gave her a good trade, worth more than the small percentage they lost.

The reader sees, therefore, that it is not at all strange that the reverend doctor, when at the age of sixty he found himself in want of a fourth help-meet, should look towards Mrs. O'Hara. She was all that we have said, and, besides, her husband had left her a good house well furnished, and a comfortable in-

come. That she was a charming woman, of course the doctor did not take into account. He was quite above such follies.

Mrs. O'Hara was now forty years of age, and exceedingly well-preserved. A cheerful temper, easy living and good health had kept her wonderfully fresh, though she was a trifle fleshy, and had a rather high color. But both were becoming to her, and it was universally admitted that the buxom lady of forty was far handsomer than the slim pale girl of eighteen had been. But, as I have said, all this was beneath the reverend doctor's consideration. One look at the man would convince you that it was. Tall, large, straight, solemn, with an immense white choker, and a sonorous voice, he was above all trifling and nonsense of any kind.

I wonder how long the reader thinks the lovely widow was in finding out what her dignified pastor was up to. If I should say that she understood in the wink of an eye, I should intimate that she waited for a hint. I don't believe she did. It is my private opinion that she took time by the forelock, and, even during the late Mrs. Mather's last illness, when it was understood that the sick lady must soon follow her two predecessors, was so particularly sympathizing with the prospective widower on his coming bereavement that he expressed a weeping hope that she would allow him to seek solace in her friendship. At any rate, he was not long in dropping in to see the widow. Nobody could find fault with that; for he and his wives had always visited there; and, besides, he went so quietly that few knew anything about it for a while.

Mrs. O'Hara was a very pleasant lady to visit. She was one of those who believe in a cheerful religion, and could mingle laughter and seriousness in the most charming manner. Even the solemn D.D. did not object to being amused. So he went evening after evening and heard the widow talk, and sing, and play, to cheer him up.

Of course this could not go on forever without being known, and it was soon whispered abroad that Mrs. O'Hara was to be the pastor's fourth wife. Nobody saw anything in it to object to, if she was willing. Nobody else wanted him, the fatality attending his domestic relations being rather a bugbear to the ladies, and she was certainly a very suitable person, so all admitted. If he was rather in a hurry, why, at his age, and when the arrangement is simply one of convenience,

there is no need of much delay. If it was proper and necessary that the minister should have a wife, why the sooner the better, said his people. So in three months after the death of his third, it was understood that the fourth was chosen, if not engaged.

One Friday evening Mrs. O'Hara was missing from her usual seat at the prayer-meeting. But that was not to be wondered at, for it was a pelting rain, and though she was usually close in her attendance, no matter what the weather, it was really too bad to expect her out that night. But it was a pity that she should lose the meeting entirely, and all that happened there, so the minister very kindly concluded to drop in a few minutes on his way home, and tell her what beautiful remarks Deacon Skinner made, and how gifted in prayer the new member, Abel Sykes, was getting to be. Every place you wish to visit is on your way, otherwise one might wonder how Doctor Mather could call the widow's house on his way home, since it was precisely in an opposite direction.

The doctor's ring was exceedingly modest, since the hour was nine o'clock of a November evening, and the lady, cosily seated before her sitting-room fire, did not hear a sound till he knocked at the door. Well did she know those three regular strokes of the ministerial knuckles, and on this occasion it struck terror to her soul. Must I tell why? Alas! the widow sat in dressing-gown and slippers, but both were becoming, and that couldn't have been the reason. Neither could it have been the yellow-covered novel in her hand, for to plump that under the chair-cushion was the work of an instant. Alas, and alackaday! I must out with it. The terror was a large steaming tumbler which stood on the table at the widow's elbow, from which she had already taken a few sips, and still more, a strong odor of gin pervaded the whole apartment.

But the lady was quick in expedients. Throwing a shawl about her shoulders, she hurried on tiptoe to the sofa, and reclined there. The knock came again, and immediately her sweet voice answered with a low "Come in!"

The door opened, and the doctor stood on the threshold gazing towards the vacant chair, and sniffing slightly.

"O doctor, I'm so glad to see you!" cried a plaintive voice from the sofa. "It was so good of you to come, and somehow, I had a presentiment that you would."

She hadn't an idea of the sort, of course, but then it was nice to say that she had.

He advanced towards her with an air of the utmost concern, inquiring what was the matter, and still snuffing the air a little.

She had such a cold and sore lungs, she told him after he had taken an armchair near her sofa. It had come upon her quite suddenly, how, she knew not, and she really got alarmed about herself that day.

"What have you taken, my dear Mrs. O'Hara?" the doctor asked, looking with anxious eyes at the pretty invalid.

"I took a dozen things, and they did me no good," she replied, sighingly. "I can nurse others, but never myself. Martha, the cook, persuaded me to take some gin and water to-night. She said it was the best thing in the world for sore lungs, and she prepared it for me. But I can't take it. I did try to, but I am not used to spirits, and they nauseate me. Even the smell of it is disagreeable; but I didn't like to trouble Martha to take it away. But now, if you will be so kind as to ring, I will get it away."

The doctor gallantly sprang up to obey the widow's request, and in a few seconds Martha appeared at the door.

"Please, Martha, take that glass away," her mistress said, sweetly. "I don't think I can drink the medicine, but I am much obliged to you for it."

Martha was too well trained to stare at the sight of her mistress lying down, and the sound of her mistress's feeble voice. She silently took the tumbler away, and drank it herself in the kitchen, chuckling over the widow's address.

"I would not recommend you to take such medicines, my dear madam," was the doctor's comment. And the widow tenderly promised that she never would again.

The gentleman was a total abstinence man, one of the foremost in the city, and, having never acquired a taste for liquor, denounced all who drank ever so slightly, as the vilest of the vile. When his wife died, it was with difficulty that he would allow new rum to be used about her, and the idea of a woman taking any sort of drink but tea and coffee, was abhorrent to him. The widow had, therefore, good reason to be alarmed at his coming.

The visit passed off well, however, and the minister went home in such a state, that if he were any one else, I should say he was more in love than ever.

No sooner was he outside the door, and down the steps, than the widow jumped from her couch of pain with surprising agility, and ran to the kitchen door. Martha, grinning, confronted her there.

"The water is all hot, ma'am," she said. "I knew you didn't want that cold one kept."

"What in the world shall I do when I'm his wife?" said the widow to herself, as she stirred her second glass. "I must marry him. I'm bound to do that; and I must have my drop of comfort. I'll have to bring him round." She sipped, then laughed merrily. "To think of bringing him round, to be sure! But I can do it. I wager you a guinea, Mrs. O'Hara," addressing her reflection in the glass, "that by a year from this time, Doctor Theophilus and I will sit quite cosily and take our glass of toddy together." And she laughed again.

The wooing sped prosperously, and by the time Dr. Mather had been six months a widower, he was engaged to Mrs. O'Hara, and the wedding-day was fixed to be at the very nearest verge of the year. Mrs. O'Hara took counsel of the ladies, and the doctor of the gentlemen. The pastor-house needed a mistress, and waiting was a mere form. Everybody voted to shorten the time, and make it nine months. So the grave and pious couple suffered themselves to be persuaded, and at the expiration of the nine months were quietly married, and took possession of their home together. Many presents were sent in on the occasion, the widow had sent her best things to her new home, and sold the rest with her house, and everything was in order. The first evening after the wedding quite a crowd came to offer their congratulations, the company being quite informal, and the new Mrs. Mather shone brightly in her new orbit. They had cake and lemonade in profusion, but nothing stronger, till the last of the evening when the greater part of the guests had gone. Then Deacon Francis, a jolly bold fellow, brought forward half a dozen bottles of champagne.

"I can't help it if you are total abstinence, doctor," he said. "A man ought to take a glass of wine on his wedding-day, if no other time, and I am going to drink your health. I hope you won't refuse it, Mrs. Mather."

The doctor's face lengthened a little, but the bride very cordially thanked the donor, and professed her willingness to take the least drop in the world, since the deacon had brought it.

Glasses were brought, and about a dozen in all were persuaded to taste of the wine. More than a taste they dared not take in the presence of Doctor Mather. Then, in good season they all took leave, and left the bride and bridegroom to themselves, with four full bottles, and one half bottle of champagne on the table.

The doctor smiled pleasantly on his wife as she began to practise her home duties by setting the remains of the refreshments carefully into the closet, and did his part by going down to the kitchen regions to make sure that the doors and windows were all fast, and to charge the cook that she should have an extra breakfast next morning. After the first time, the new mistress was to give her own orders, but as yet she was company. When the doctor went up stairs again, Mrs. Mather had gone up to her chamber. He looked about to see that all was in order for the night, then went to the closet to get a dose of a certain kind of drops which he took when he had dyspeptic troubles. To be sure, he felt quite well now, but the cake he had eaten that evening would be pretty sure to make itself felt before morning, and he thought best to have his ounce of preventive. Everything had been set up very nicely by Mrs. Mather, and he had to move the champagne bottles to get at his medicine. As he did so, he observed that the bottle which had been left half full was now empty. He stared, and looked again. No mistake, there were two empty bottles.

"She must have emptied it out, so that the servants should not be tempted," he thought, admiringly.

The next day he observed that another of the bottles had disappeared.

"I gave it to Martha to give a poor sick woman she knows," Mrs. Mather said, sweetly, when he asked.

"O! all right, of course," he replied. "I didn't know but the servants might have helped themselves. Are you sure Martha didn't want it for herself, my dear?"

The bride of a day reproached her husband very prettily, and was awfully shocked at his suspicions. Martha was as good as gold, had been with her ever since she was first married. She would trust Martha with anything.

So one after another the champagne bottles disappeared for the benefit of the unknown sick woman.

One day, after a week of married bliss, the

minister was sent for to attend a funeral at a distance from home. It was an invitation he could not well refuse, though he could hardly get back that night, and his wife was not inclined to go with him. It was really provoking, but the doctor made the best of it, and went.

"I shall try to get back, my dear," he said. "But if I do not come, you may know I could not."

"Come if you can, my dear," was her parting salutation, as she stood in the door and watched him down the steps.

The night set in early, with a cold drenching rain; but the doctor was not to be daunted. At half-past nine he walked up the steps of his house, and let himself in with the latch-key. It was warm and bright inside, and he rejoiced that he had braved the storm to find such a harbor.

The sitting-room door was closed, and he went to open it softly, intending to surprise his wife, who had, doubtless, given up his coming before that time. He saw the cheerful fire, the table and armchair drawn up before it, and Mrs. Mather sitting there the picture of comfort. But also, he saw a steaming tumbler, and smelt a strange odor compounded of many liquors, apparently. At the first sound she started up, and for one instant the welcome hesitated on her lips. Then she ran to throw her arms round his neck, and give him a kiss highly flavored with whiskey.

"My dear!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"O! I was taking something to comfort me, I was so lonesome," she said, with a defiant laugh. "Come and taste it. You won't? But you must."

"I am not in the habit—" he began, but she broke in.

"I know it, and that is the reason why I want you to taste this now. A man can't properly denounce liquor when he has never tasted it. How do you know but all the drunkards you see get drunk on weak tea? You don't know the excitement of a good glass of punch on a night like this. Come and try."

The doctor was astonished, frightened, horrified, fascinated, and astonished again. He suffered himself to be led to the armchair, and scarcely knowing what he was about, to be fed with whiskey punch by teaspoonfuls, his wife sitting laughing on his knee while he imbibed. Then the glass was put to his lips, and before he knew it the contents went

down his throat. It was a clear case of Samson and Delilah.

Then he sat before the fire, like one in a dream, feeling very comfortable, and growing every moment more so, and saw his wife go out to order supper for him. If she took another glass in the kitchen to indemnify herself for the glass he had drunk, he was too preoccupied to know it. Presently a nice little supper on a tray was placed beside him, and his wife helped him to eat it, appearing to his eyes to be in the midst of a halo.

How the doctor got up stairs to bed that night, he never clearly remembered. Of course he repented in the morning, and humbled himself before his wife, even while he reproached her. She took it all very well, but insisted that he had done no harm, and at length, growing weary of his preaching, turned it off with a laugh.

"You can't deny that it was good, now, can you?"

Reader, it is time to draw the curtain over the misdeeds of this reverend sinner. For Mrs. O'Hara's boast came true, and within the year he took his toddy quite comfortably with her every night, and which went up stairs in the most see-saw manner is hard to tell.

"But, my dear, I have always been a total abstinence advocate," the doctor said, in some distress. "What shall I do when I am called on to speak? I can't lie!"

"Of course you can't lie, as little George Washington said," laughed the lady, jeeringly. "You can tell the truth, but not the whole truth. How do you suppose my first husband did?"

"Did he ever drink?" asked the doctor, astounded.

His wife laughed merrily.

"To be sure, and no one ever found it out. Martha is a faithful soul. You can speak on temperance just the same, my dear, and take a little drop to oil your tongue before you go."

The doctor sighed. He was in the toils. The woman fascinated and ruled him, and so long as he yielded, was all smiles. He had thought himself strong, he found himself weak.

Well, reader, there they are. I dare say you have often heard Doctor Mather talk total abstinence; but be sure, since his fourth marriage he never talks of it without choking a little. But Martha is as faithful as ever, and no one knows.—And what is your opinion of the Widow O'Hara?

MY ALLIGATOR.

Darling, N P

Ballou's Monthly Magazine (1866-1893); Apr 1873; 37, 4; American Periodicals

pg. 354

MY ALLIGATOR.

BY N. P. DARLING.

I SUPPOSE I am the most eccentric man in the whole town of Nabseguum. My neighbors say so, at least, and I accept it as a fact. It is rather odd for a man to fill his house with stuffed monkeys, lions, tigers, bears, snakes, and all kinds of beasts, birds and reptiles. now isn't it?

Well, that is just what I've done, and I keep doing it. I have quite a museum, I assure you; and I am adding to it every day.

Perhaps it is needless to inform you that I am a bachelor, as you have guessed that already. No married man would be allowed to keep an African lion, a royal Ben-

gal tiger, a boa-constrictor, a dozen monkeys and an immense alligator in his drawing-room. No, if a man wants such company, he must remain single, although I assure, you, ma'am, that it is not a love for such society that has kept me a bachelor. On the contrary, it was from fear of being bamboozled into matrimony by a certain terrible female of my acquaintance, who got into a very bad habit of calling upon me eight times per week, that I purchased the first of my collection, a splendid great rhinoceros, and set him up in the front hall.

The rhinoceros did excellently well for a few days; but Mrs. Maneater, finding the

front door guarded, pounced upon me through the back door. Then I bought me a handsome stuffed lion and set him up in the kitchen, and for a week that terrible female was kept at bay, but at last she gathered courage to face the rhinoceros, and once more I found myself in her power.

I went on adding to my collection. I bought the most ferocious looking animals I could find, and filled every room in the house with them, but without avail; Mrs. Maneater was determined not to be frightened again, and I found myself completely in her power, from the fact, my dear sir, that it has always been and probably always will be impossible for me to say no to a woman.

Mrs. Maneater is my next door neighbor. She owns the house in which she lives, and it is a very handsome house, too, and Mrs. Maneater is a very handsome woman.

—"Beauty's brightest colors
Have decked her out in all the hues of heaven;"

and she's young, too—not over thirty, and as I am forty, and rather good looking and quite wealthy, it isn't at all singular that Mrs. Maneater should have selected me for her next victim.

I have been acquainted with Mrs. Maneater now about fourteen months. The first time I saw her I was delighted with her, for she is a delightful woman, and although I am a bachelor of forty, I haven't remained single on account of any particular dislike for the sex. O no! I admire the sex, and I came very near falling in love with Mrs. Maneater at first sight.

Mrs. Maneater is a tall woman. Longitudinally she suits me exactly. The top of her head reaches just to my eyebrows.

Then there is a fullness about her form that I rather like. Her hair, too, is just the color that pleases me—black as a raven's wing and exceedingly luxuriant, while as to her eyes—well, if I had had 'em made for me, they couldn't have suited me better.

In fact, there's only one bad thing about Mrs. Maneater. As you never would guess what that one bad thing is, I'm going to tell you. It is on account of this one thing that I call her a terrible female. She is very beautiful, as I have observed before, and I'm sure she would make an excellent wife, but, alas! she has one infernal bad habit, and I shudder every time I think of

it. No matter how good a husband she gets, she's sure to bury him within six months after marriage!

She has done that thing now four times in rapid succession. Yes ma'am, this beautiful but terrible female has had four husbands, and she put every one of them in their little beds within six months of their wedding days. In the Nabsegum cemetery, ranged in a line, are four beautiful tombstones, and beneath them lie the bones of Mrs. Maneater's four husbands.

Now I like to see a woman enterprising, and if she has a taste for marrying a great deal, or rather, if she thinks it is her mission to marry as many men as she can in a certain number of years, why, I'm sure I don't want to stand in the way of her mission; but I *do* object, most decidedly, sir, to being any woman's fifth husband.

That's the kind of a man I am, and I don't hesitate to say so right out; but I couldn't tell Mrs. Maneater so. I knew, the first time I saw her, when I looked down into her glorious eyes, that if she should say to me, in that winning way of hers:

"O Wellington, will you, will you, will you, will you come to the bower?" that I couldn't say no, notwithstanding the horror I have of being her fifth.

I said to myself, "Wellington Woggles, if that woman finds out your weak point, you're a doomed man. Salt wont save you. She has marked you for her own—with the figure five. Protect yourself, if you can. Buy a dog; buy two dogs; buy anything, no matter what, if you have the least hope that it will protect you from that terrible female."

Well, as the reader knows, I bought a rhinoceros, a lion, a tiger, bears, wolves, catamounts, snakes, etc., but alas! they couldn't frighten Mrs. Maneater. She had too many dead husbands to be scared by a dead lion, even if it was stuffed, and got up so as to look most ferociously.

I was in despair; and as if to make my misery more complete, Mrs. Maneater made me a present of a dozen very handsome handkerchiefs, and in one corner of each, instead of my initials, she had worked the figure five!

"Great heavens!" cried I, as my number stared me in the face, "this is too terrible! This is perfectly awful! O, *must* I be her fifth? Is there no escape from this

dread female?" I cried, wildly clasping the form of my most ferocious looking stuffed lion, while his tail, slowly wagging to and fro in the evening breeze, seemed to answer, "None, none, none!"

While I was hugging my lion, and bewailing my sad fate, the doorbell rang.

"'Tis she!" I groaned, wildly tearing the lion's hair, and wiping my eyes with his tawny mane.

But I was agreeably disappointed. The servant entered, bearing a card, "John Jones, New York."

"Show him up," said I.

A moment later Mr. J. Jones appeared. He was a young man and rather handsome. Perhaps you have noticed that the Joneses are handsome, especially the girls.

"This is Mr. Woggles, I believe," said Jones, glancing around at the lion, tiger, bear, snakes and monkeys.

"You can stake your money on that, Jones," I replied.

"Wellington Woggles?"

"The very same, my dear Jones," I cried, grasping his hand. "Glad to see you, old fellow. How is Tom Jones, and Davy, and the rest of 'em?"

"They're all quite well, thank you," replied Jones.

"And—well, you have called to—"

"Sell you an alligator."

"Sell me a what?"

"An alligator, Mr. Woggles."

"Jones," said I, "are you joking? Have you come here to trifle with my feelings? Because, Mr. Jones, you have touched my weak spot. An alligator is just what my soul is yearning for. I am so peculiarly situated, Jones, that nothing but an alligator can save me from a fate worse than—O heavens, Jones, were you ever a *fifth*?"

"I don't know as I understand you, Mr. Woggles," replied Jones. "All I've got to say is this: if you want to buy an alligator, I've got just the reptile you want."

"Is he alive, Jones?"

"Well, no, but he's just as good as a live one."

"How's that? Will he chew up things? Will he walk around, and whisk his tail just like a live one?"

"Exactly. That's just what he will do. You see, he's fitted up inside with machinery, and all you've got to do is to wind him up with this 'ere key, an' he'll be as lively as a cricket."

"Jones, name your price. That alligator is mine. Where is he?"

"There he is," answered Jones, drawing me to the window, and pointing at a horse and wagon that stood in front of the house. "Do you see that long box in the wagon?"

"Yes."

"Well, the alligator is in that box. You see, Mr. Woggles, I heard that you were fond of such things, and learning that you had no alligator in your collection, why, I brought the reptile right along, feeling sure that you'd want 'im."

"And I do want him, Jones, that is—well, you warrant him to chew?"

"Yes sir."

"Then I'll take him. Bring the critter in."

Jones named the price, I agreed to it, and then he went down to the wagon, and, with the help of my man Sam, got the box out on to the sidewalk, took off the cover, wound up the machinery of the reptile, and, to my surprise and delight, the monster walked out of the box, and, with a sly switch of his long tail, knocked Sam to the ground, and then quietly walked up the steps, into the house, and confronted me in the parlor with wide open jaws.

"Good heavens, Jones!" I cried, "the dam thing is alive!"

"He's just as good, yes, better than a live one," said Jones. "Don't be afraid, he won't hurt you," as the huge monster snapped his jaws right under my nose. "He's just a little playful."

"I never heard of playful machinery before," said I.

"And you never saw such perfect machinery before," returned Jones.

"No, I suppose not; but, dang it, can't you let his machinery run down?" I asked; for you see he kept snapping at my nose.

"He's wound up for twenty-four hours," replied Jones; "but you can stop his jaw by just touching this spring here;" and he pressed one of the scales. "This spring," touching another scale, "makes his tail wag."

"I should think so!" cried I, as the alligator's tail swept round, and knocked my stuffed lion half way across the room.

"This spring stops the wagging. This spring makes him walk."

"Jones," said I, "will he swallow?"

"Swallow?" Jones looked up at me inquiringly. "What do you want him to swallow?"

"O, nothing in particular," said I; "only if he can swallow I should like to know it."

"Why, the machinery is in the way, you see," returned Jones. "He might get some small things down his throat though."

"You—you don't think he could dispose of—a woman—a widow, for instance, do you, Jones?"

I *thought* the alligator snickered. As for Jones, he stared at me aghast. "Why, Mr. Woggles, you wouldn't—"

"O no, I wouldn't let him, Mr. Jones. I was just asking out of curiosity. You see, my next door neighbor is a widow lady, and she calls to see me quite often, and it would be infernal bad—that is, for her—if the alligator should take a notion to swallow her."

"Yes, but he aint one of them kind of alligators, you know."

"Well, I'm glad to hear that he's perfectly gentle and kind; and now, Mr. Jones, if you'll just step into the next room, I'll pay you for the reptile."

After having settled with Jones, I bade him good-night and returned to my alligator, and began exercising him a little in snapping his jaws, wagging his tail and walking.

I found that I could work him first-rate in everything except in the management of his tail. I couldn't get that under control. I touched the spring, and the next moment found myself sprawling under the piano, while the tail kept sweeping around, knocking over chairs, tables, and my stuffed animals—O, how the monkeys flew! and smashing my china vases, and the ornaments on the mantel, and working destruction generally to everything within reach of its terrible sweep.

"By George! I wish Mrs. Maneater would pop in now. It's my opinion she'd look further for number five."

"O, you do?"

"Where the deuce did that voice come from?" I asked, peering around the room. The alligator snapped his jaws.

"Hold on, Mr. Alligator, I didn't touch that spring!" I cried.

The alligator winked one eye and then started for me.

"Egad! he *is* alive!" I yelled, rolling myself into a heap under the piano.

"Come out o' that," growled the alligator, poking his huge jaws under the piano, and snapping at my leg.

"O horrors! alive and *talking*?"

"Yes, I do feel rather lively," replied the alligator, wiggling his tail facetiously.

"Now I will believe that there are unicorns," I groaned. "A *talking* alligator! and in the same room with me, with no hope of escape. O, this is worse than being *number five*!"

"Do you think so now?" with a hoarse laugh.

"O, spare me, Mr. Alligator?"

"Not if I know myself, Mr. Woggles. I haven't had anything to eat for three days, and I'm decidedly hungry."

"But, dangnation, my dear Mr. Alligator, if all you want is something to eat, just step down to the dining-room with me, and I'll order the cook to prepare a supper for you fit for an alderman."

"O, don't trouble yourself, Mr. Woggles. I prefer my vittles *raw*," returned the alligator, with an affectionate glance at my fat legs.

"O, Got in Himmel! would you eat me?"

"O, went I?" laughed the alligator.

This was terrible. I don't think the reader appreciates how terrible. Only think of me, curled up under the piano, with an immense alligator snapping his huge jaws in my face, and declaring in the English language (which made it far more terrible) that he was going to make a supper of me. O, it was awful! I trembled so as to fairly shake the house, while the cold perspiration stood out in drops like frog's eyes all over me.

"Do you know," said I, looking sternly at the alligator, "that this is unlawful? Do you know that it is a criminal offence to eat a man? Don't you know that you'll be hanged for it?"

The alligator laughed. "I must be convicted first, and to do that, I must be tried by a jury of my peers—that is twelve alligators, and do you think they'd bring me in guilty? Not much. They might bring in a verdict of insanity, but I should not care a whisk of my tail about that."

"Did you ever study law?" I asked.

"No, but I've eaten a judge and four lawyers."

"And I'm to be your next victim?"

"Well, it looks like it now," returned the saurian, "but still I'll let you off on conditions."

"Name them?" I yelled; "name them?"

The alligator was humming "Hear me

Norma," and beating time with his tail. "O, don't yell so, Woggles! You've put me all out of tune. What a very excitable fellow you are!"

"The conditions! the conditions?"

"Still harping on my daughter. By the way, Wogg, did you ever see Ned Booth in Hamlet?"

"Confound Hamlet! Name your conditions?" I cried.

"Well, in the first place," said the alligator, snapping at a fly, "I must ask you a question. Do you believe in the transmigration of souls?"

"No, by thunder! I don't swallow that doctrine."

"Well, you *must* swallow it. If you don't I'll swallow you." And he opened his jaws to their widest extent.

"O spare me! I believe! I'm convinced!" I cried, in terror.

"Very good, Mr. Woggles. Then you believe that when I was on the earth before, and wore whiskers (I don't mean this kind of a whisker)," lashing his tail, "I bore the name of Jim Longden?"

"Did you, though?"

"Pon honor, Woggles."

"Egad?" said I, "Jim, this is getting interesting."

"And it's going to be more so, Woggles. Now, perhaps you know a certain Mrs. Maneater?"

"Know her? Alas! I know her but too well. She's a terrible female."

"Well, that isn't so singular, considering I'm her grandfather."

"Her what?"

"Her grandfather, my dear Woggles," repeated the alligator, with a smile.

"Ha!"

"And now for the conditions."

"O spare me, Mr. Alligator—my dear Jim—"

"Why, that's what I'm going to do," interrupted the saurian. "I'm going to spare you, providing you'll solemnly swear to marry my granddaughter Mrs. Maneater within twenty-four hours."

Now, I don't know what my reader may think, but for my part, the moment the alligator declared his relationship to Mrs. Maneater I began to be suspicious. "Now I think of it," I muttered; "that voice sounds very familiar. I'm very sure I've heard that voice before. It's a woman's voice. It's—"

"Swear," growled the alligator.

"He's quiet now," thought I. "One spring and I'm safe."

"Swear to marry her, Woggles."

"Not if I know myself, Jim," I cried, starting up and jumping clear over the alligator, tail and all. Then rushing through the doorway, I closed the door behind me, and locking it, surveyed my alligator through the keyhole.

"Foiled!" muttered the saurian, lashing his tail in a rage.

After a while he quieted down a little. Then I noticed that he was suffering with some internal difficulty. His groans almost melted my heart. At last, with a wail more terrible than all the rest, he lashed his tail three times, and rolling over on to his back, cried, in a voice that I knew but too well, "*I've broken the key, and I can't get out!* I'm lost, lost! I never shall get my fifth!"

I went to bed then, and went to sleep with a smile upon my countenance, and awoke next morning wearing a broad grin.

After dressing myself, I went down and took a peep at my alligator through the keyhole. Finding him quiet, I didn't venture to molest him then, but went down to breakfast.

Upon taking up the morning paper, I found there had been a railroad accident the night before, and among the list of killed I found the name of John Jones, of New York.

I was quietly sipping my coffee, when my housekeeper rushed in, crying, "O Mr. Woggles, have you heard the terrible news?"

"About the railroad disaster?"

"No, Mrs. Maneater—*she's missing!* They're going to drag the river for her."

"What, do they think she's committed suicide?"

"Yes, or that she's been murdered."

"Horrible!"

The housekeeper went off moaning.

Then I took a cup of coffee and a couple of muffins and went up to the drawing-room.

"Jim," said I, speaking through the keyhole, "would you like a muffin?"

"O yes," in a very faint voice.

"Will you be quiet if I come in?"

"Yes."

I opened the door, and going up to the alligator, who made no hostile demonstra-

tions, passed the muffins and the cup of coffee down his throat.

"Thank you, Mr. Woggles," in a very soft voice.

"Do you know, Jim," said I, "that your granddaughter Mrs. Maneater is missing?"

Jim didn't answer.

"Furthermore, Mr. John Jones, the only man, whom I suspect that knew anything about her disappearance, was killed last night."

The alligator groaned and threw up the coffee cup.

"Now, Jim," I continued, "if you know anything about Mrs. Maneater's whereabouts, and will tell me; and furthermore, if you'll ask my pardon for frightening me so last night, and will give up all designs you may have had for making me your

granddaughter's fifth, I'll send you back to your native swamp."

"Never?" yelled the alligator.

"Very well, then you remain with me."

And he never has from that day to this. He doesn't talk a great deal, and is generally pretty quiet. His appetite is poor for an alligator, and he persists in having his meat cooked. He is quite fond of beefsteak, roast turkey, with oyster sauce, and likes sugar and milk in his tea. I'm quite fond of him, I assure you, for he is really very intelligent for an alligator. He is very mild and gentle, and is exceedingly fond of company, although he never talks to any one but me.

But it's very singular, I think, dear reader, that Mrs. Maneater has never been heard of since the night that I bought my alligator.

MY FIRST VOYAGE AT SEA.

BY BOB STAY.

My name is Robert Stay. I was christened Robert by an Episcopal minister, at the instigation of a gentleman friend of my parents, who, on my father's demise, a year after my birth, proceeded to console my disconsolate mother with so much assiduity that pity for her condition begat love, and when I was at the interesting age of three years he became my stepfather as well as godfather.

The change in my mother's life didn't interest me so much then as it did afterwards; but when I arrived at the mature age of twelve, and found that I was motherless, I began to have a natural feeling of wonder as to what was to become of me, who was left an orphan at that early age.

My new father had consoled a widow successfully for a number of years, and so, in the course of events, a widow essayed to console him, and successfully; for a year after his loss of a wife, and my greater one of a mother, he again resumed marital relations with another widow, this time with three children in addition.

My life heretofore had been rather pleasant; but when the new wife of my father appeared on my scene of life, trouble began to come.

She eyed me with sweet loving looks that made me feel uncomfortable, and so I went down to the river, ostensibly to have a swim, but more to get away from her eyes, which seemed to watch every motion that I made, and, as I rightly conjectured, with anything but a friendly interest.

"Where have you been?" she asked, in petulant tones, on my return from my ablutions *au naturelle* in Taunton River.

"Been in swimming," was my mild reply.

"Been in swimmin'! I wonder why a great boy like you couldn't split a little wood before you went away without leave; but I s'pose you've always been let to run wild."

"I would, if you had asked me to. I thought there was plenty all ready," was my answer, wishing to propitiate her.

"You might have asked, and then you'd have known; I aint goin' to have a great lout like you loafin' round."

I made no answer to this, but took the axe, went to the woodpile near the kitchen, and

began to chop as savagely as I could, making the pine splinters fly before my wrath.

Considering that she had only been in the house two days, I thought she was taking a firm grip on the reins of our home government, and so worked away like a professional, my axe rising with quick jerks, and falling with terrible zeal, in perfect time with the passion aroused within.

Setting a piece of wood on the block, I turned my back to the kitchen window, where she stood watching me, and raised the axe with vengeance in my arms.

The tool was a rickety old affair, and was forever slipping off the helve; and as it was raised in the air, whizz! it went off the handle, crash through the window, and down it came through the glass, my amiable stepmother springing back with a scared shriek, just in time to avoid a severe blow in her face; for the axe struck the identical pane of glass that her lovely countenance was peering through.

Before I could recover from my astonishment at the disaster, she was in the yard, and by the time I could realize her intentions, I was across her knees, receiving sundry whacks with a slipper, which she had indignantly wrenched from her foot, and which proved remarkably well adapted to inflict pain. I had hitherto been moderately free from corporeal punishment outside of school, and as the slipper came down with stinging force, like a young colt who first feels the lash, I brought up my heels with quick energy, planting them directly in the inflamed visage of the termagant over me.

With a howl of agony she dropped me, and grasped her nose, from which the blood was beginning to run, which howl was increased to a yell as the form of my stepfather was seen approaching the field of our battle.

"What is the matter?" he asked, in energetic tones.

"I asked him to split some wood for me, an' he got mad an' threw the axe through the window at my head; an' when I went to punish him he kicked me in the face, an' I'm so glad you've come," whined my stepmother, as well as she was able through blood and tears.

I will give my stepfather the credit of supposing that he believed his new wife's statement, for he seized me, dragged me into the kitchen, and without a moment's hesitation, gave me a whaling that even his spouse, who was leaning over a basin of water, bathing her injured visage, approved of fully.

I did nothing but shriek with pain and indignation at the whipping I received, and the lie that caused it, and so, when I was ordered to go to my bedroom, I did so at once, and threw myself on the couch to indulge in an exhaustive fit of weeping.

I wasn't invited down to supper that evening; it was sent up to me, and in sulky silence I ate it, sitting on the edge of the bed, and vowing all manner of revenge on the interesting successor to my mother.

I was a little over fourteen then, large for my years, and in decidedly what is termed the "hog age." I knew more than any man that lived, and had strength in proportion to my knowledge, according to my own estimation, and flattered myself that if I had cared to, I could have demolished my stepfather when he attacked me, and not half tried, either.

Burning thoughts of revenge kept me awake until I heard the village clock in Squaw Betty strike twelve, and then I fell into a troubled sleep, from which I awoke at dawn.

"Mr. Roach, you make that boy ask forgiveness, and make him promise he won't do so no more," I heard the female tyrant say to my stepfather, as she prepared to set the dishes on the table for breakfast.

In a moment a plan of action flashed over my mind, and when my aggressor appeared I ate humble pie, said I was truly sorry for my misdemeanor the day before, and, in fact, lied shockingly about our fracas.

Mrs. Roach was satisfied, and swelled like an injured but worthy dame as she presided at our matutinal meal, while I ate my breakfast in sulky silence.

Mr. Roach was a brick manufacturer in Squaw Betty, the small village where we lived, and which is near Taunton; and as his presence was required at the kiln early in the morning, he departed as soon as he finished eating.

I did the same, but went in a different direction, towards the schoolhouse, and sat on the steps whittling until the scholars began to assemble for the daily recitations of their studies.

I filed in with the rest, and took my accustomed seat; but instead of preparing to study my lessons for the day, I began to pile my books all neatly together, and to put in my pockets a number of little articles that I treasured, and to gain which was my main object in going to the schoolhouse at all.

"What are you going to do?" asked the teacher, with some curiosity, as he watched my proceedings.

"I only came to pack up my things, for I am going to leave," I replied, in as cheerful tones as I could assume.

"Where are you going?" was the somewhat natural query of the teacher, although he was satisfied with my reply.

"Into Mr. Roach's office," was my answer. "You going to leave your books here?" was the next question asked, as I began to walk out of school.

"No sir. I have to go some errands for Mr. Roach now, and only stopped in to get a few things I wanted. One of the men is coming for them to-night or in the morning, just as he gets time," was the ready lie I told. The teacher was satisfied, and I walked away. I went home to dinner that day just as though I had returned from school, and departed as soon as the meal was over, apparently going to attend the afternoon session.

Instead of that, I went over by the Insane Asylum, and arranged my plans so hastily formed in the morning when ordered to confess what I had not done.

It may have been an insane thing that I was about to do, and if so, then while loafing around a refuge for crazy people I must have had a dim inkling of my disease, and gone in the neighborhood of congenial company for my misery; for there I remained until the waning sun notified me that time was fleeing, and I must go home to supper.

"Robert, mother and I are going out to a little company this evening, after the children go to bed, and you must stay at home until we come back. If we don't get home before ten, you may go to bed, but get up and let us in when we ring," said Mr. Roach, as I sneaked into the room where the supper-table awaited me; for, as I entered the house, a sudden fear possessed me that he might have met the teacher and become informed of my lies and truancy.

"Very well," was my meek reply, my mind relieved to find that my fears were groundless.

Supper was soon over, and at half past seven the master and mistress were away,

Mrs. Roach's three boys being snugly tucked into bed, while I was detailed as a human watch-dog over the household.

I had something to do, and do quickly; so as soon as I was left to myself, and the coast was clear, I went to work to pack up my trunk, putting in all my clothes.

Having done this with method, I went to the desk and forced the lock open, taking grim delight in using the same axe that had caused the trouble in the family, and having opened it, I soon had access to the drawer that I knew Mr. Roach used for the receptacle of money.

I was surprised to find that there were over a thousand dollars there, but I quietly extracted a couple of hundred from the roll, and then wrote a note to those whom I was so deliberately robbing, in the following terms:

"MR. ROACH,—When I said that I threw the axe at your wife, I lied, for I didn't. She lied, and I didn't. I have stolen some money from you, and meant to, for you've got all my ma's. You'll find your horse and wagon in Boston, for I'm going there to go to the East Indies, and I can't carry them with me. Kiss Mrs. Roach, and all of your new family, and don't try to catch

"ROBERT STAY."

The note was rather mixed, but then I was in an awful hurry when I wrote it, and did not take much time for corrections, for I threw it on the desk, and prepared to leave.

As I did so, I saw a package of papers in the desk that was addressed to my father, my own father, I mean, and on looking closer, saw some of them were legal documents; so, thinking I had as much right to them as Mr. Roach, I appropriated them as coolly as I had the money.

My trunk was soon in the kitchen, and the horse harnessed up, for the stable was directly back of the house, and then I put my trunk in the wagon, and the horse was driven off into a piece of woods near the house and left there, while I went back to arrange for the return of those whom I was leaving so deliberately.

My next move was to go to the room where the children were sleeping and lock them in. This done, I went all over the house down stairs, closed the inside blinds, nailed them fast, locked every door after me, and took the keys as I went, until I came to the last door,

and after securing that, I went to the well and dropped the bunch of keys into the water.

I knew it would bother outsiders to get in for some time and discover my French leave, and also knew that Mr. Roach was aware of my thorough knowledge of the stage route to Boston, and that I could drive there by night as well as day, having been on the road many times with our teams when they were conveying bricks; and that I should have a start with his private horse, which was the fastest one in the village, that he could not make up until the next day.

Filled with this idea, and thinking that he would be sure that I would, boylike, tell my plans, and that he would follow me to Boston, I went back to the team, got in, and drove quickly away—not towards the Hub of the universe, but towards the place where they furnish the oil to grease the aforesaid Hub, the Whaling City of the world—New Bedford.

I had my father's watch on, for Mr. Roach had always allowed me to wear that, and by the light of a match I found that I had got started a little after nine at night.

I thought that the folks would be pretty likely to stay from home until ten o'clock, and that it would take them a good half hour to get inside of the house and learn of my departure, and so I whipped up and drove away at a quick trot.

I had decided to run away that night, and thought I could manage to steal the horse and wagon, and so take my clothes; but this giving me so good an opportunity was more than I had bargained for, so I improved it readily, and only changed my tactics in fastening up the house, as the chance to bother them came upon me.

It was a beautiful night, and I drove so fast that two hours later I was entering the outskirts of New Bedford; I went directly to the Mansion House, where I had my trunk unloaded, and then drove my team to the stable on Purchase Street, where Mr. Roach was in the habit of leaving it when he was in the city. Telling the hostler that Mr. Roach would be in from Boston by stage in the course of a day or two, I left the team without further remark and walked back to the hotel.

Mr. Bee the landlord was a little inquisitive to know how I came there alone at such a time of night, but his mind was satisfied by my stating that I had come to meet Mr.

Roach, who would be there in a packet in the course of a day or so, and that I had left Taunton early, but had lost the way, and it required me some time to get in the right direction.

My story was believed, and so I went to bed, and got up early in the morning with my determination firmly set of carrying out my intentions previously made, and that was to go on a voyage of some kind; where, was immaterial, as long as I got away.

Whaling was brisk in those days, and I soon found the shipping-office of Shark, Skin & Co., and having learned from a boy who was sweeping the sidewalk in front of it, that the agents would be down at eight, and that a boy was wanted for the Pegasus, which was to sail that forenoon, I determined to go in that ship if possible, and stated my resolution to the youth, who offered to bet me a barrel of sperm that I'd come back captain if I did.

I ate breakfast that morning with an eye on the window and door, ready to bolt out of the former if Mr. Roach came in the latter; and having eaten the last meal I was to enjoy on shore for many a day, I returned to the office of Shark, Skin & Co., to meet my destiny.

"Where do you belong?" asked Shark, as I stated my desire to go whaling.

"Boston," was my false answer.

"Do your folks want you to go?" snuffled Skin.

"I have run away," I replied, telling the truth for once.

"Run away, hev you? Well, that haint no objection, as I know of," commented Shark, sure of a chance of fitting me out at an enormous charge.

"What lay do you expect?" Skin asked.

I didn't know what they meant, but told them I was used to a good bed at home, and though I knew a sailor fared hard sometimes, I hoped to be able to lay in as soft a place as possible.

I gave my opinion with some confidence, and was surprised to hear both men laugh as though their hearts would break at my greenness.

When they had recovered their composure in a measure, they explained that the lay was the per centage of the voyage, and they would offer me the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

I was somewhat nettled at their laughter at me, and thinking they were trying to get the advantage of me, resolutely refused to go

unless I received the two hundred and fiftieth lay.

"You are a sharp one, you are, but we'll give it to you," replied Shark, with a peculiar smile.

Sorry that I had not asked for more when I observed how readily they assented to my terms, I signed the shipping-list, and was thus held for the voyage.

I found to my intense mortification, after I got to sea, that they had agreed to give me one barrel out of every two hundred and twenty-five taken; but I, in my stupidity and self-confidence, had refused that offer, and forced the agents to give me only one barrel of oil out of every two hundred and fifty. I never told my shipmates how shrewd I had been when I shipped.

"Hev yer got any duds?" asked Shark, after I had signed the vessel's papers.

I told him I had a trunk at the Mansion House, but wanted a regular sea chest and outfit; but before I could inform him that I had money to purchase them with, he said:

"All right, sonny, we'll furnish you, an' take an order on the voyage for it."

They were the most accommodating men I ever saw; and not knowing that I was paying six times too much for the articles, I bought everything they suggested, and at their own price; for which I signed an order on my voyage, and was the owner of about forty dollars' worth of shoddy clothes, a cheap pine chest, and the usual outfit of a sailor, all of which was supposed to represent a hundred dollars in value.

The interest on the sum for four years would make my total bill quite a heavy one for the amount they delivered me, while I thought I was trading to advantage; for they allowed me to beat them down a little on everything they sold me.

"Now rouse round and get your things on board," said Shark, in energetic tones, when our trading was over.

"I have got my trunk at the Mansion House, and I am all ready to go as soon as I get it," I answered.

"Jump round there and bring it over here, and shift your dunnage into this chist; you would get yer head smashed if yer carried a trunk into a fore'castle," said Skin, in his snuffing tones.

I was afraid that one of them would offer to go with me, and thought if they did, that Bee, the landlord of the Mansion House, would suspect that something was wrong,

and detain me; but I afterwards decided that they had the same ideas, and thought if there was any trouble about me before I sailed, that they would be aloof from it if they let me go alone.

I went back to the hotel, paid my bill, told the landlord that Mr. Roach was waiting for me, and asked him to give me gold for the bills I had.

A clerk was sent over to the bank nearly opposite the hotel, and the gold procured for me; and so I was started in good shape in a hack.

I soon was at the shipping-office, my clothes transferred to my chest, and then, as I could not sell the trunk at any price to Shark, Skin & Co., that firm turning up their nose at the thing, but telling me, magnanimously, that I might store it with them until my return, if I liked, which offer I accepted gladly, my traps were put into a wagon, and I was taken down to Union Wharf, put into a runner's boat, and delivered on board my home.

The Pegasus was a ship of four hundred and fifty tons, and was already to sail as soon as the captain appeared.

It seemed that he was in Dartmouth, a town near New Bedford, and expected any moment; and that the ship's papers had been left at the office to ship just such a boy as I was, if one turned up in time, so as to supply the place of a boy who had shipped and deserted the week before.

About two o'clock in the afternoon the captain came on board, a case of papers in his hand, and every one except myself was immediately in a fever of bustle in getting underway; while I sat like patience on a monument, perched on my chest, where I had remained from the time I came on board until then, except when dinner was called, when I mustered courage, and my pot and pan from my chest, and got my meal with the rest. All hands had been too much engrossed with their own affairs to heed me until it came to getting underway, and then I was in every one's way, it seemed to me.

"What's your name, boy?" shouted an officer to me, as he began to issue orders rapidly.

"Robert Stay, sir," was my respectful answer.

"Well, Bobstay, if you don't lend a hand with the boys to up anchor, I'll put a ratlin to your shoulders; and I never heard of ratlin' down a bobstay before." And with a laugh

at his own facetiousness, he gave me a chuck forward among the sailors at the windlass.

The chain was hove short, the sails loosened, then our last hold to America taken on board, and the ship began to fill away slowly before the breeze.

We had no pilot, for our captain required none, and so we were soon running down the harbor of New Bedford, while I, not knowing to what part of the world we were going, and only sure that we were after whales somewhere, got into the foreshrouds to take my last look of land for some months, and home, as I hoped, for many years to come.

My heart beat rapidly as I thought that I was now to be a wanderer in the world, with none to care for me, when, looking up the bay, I saw a boat heading for us, and in the stern sheets of it could distinctly make out the form of my stepfather, and by his side the only constable that the little town of Squaw Betty boasted of.

With fear and trembling I watched the boat until I became assured there was no possibility of its overtaking us, and then I stepped on deck again, and began to look around to see where I was to be quartered.

After a few surly rebuffs and many curses, I at last got a sailor to assist me in getting my chest in the forecabin, appropriated the only vacant berth that I found, and arranged my bed and bedding as comfortably as I could, thus preparing to accommodate myself to my present life.

I had hardly got myself fixed to my liking before the order for all hands to muster on deck was given, and so with the crowd I walked aft, heard the first speech from a captain of a ship, in which he said he was "down on drunkenness and shirking, but would be a little angel as long as we toed the lines and came up to the scratch," and much more of the same import.

Watches were then arranged by the officers choosing their boat's crew, and I found that I was assigned to the fifth boat, which was in charge of the cooper.

That matter having been arranged, the mate sent the men to their different duties, and then sang out:

"Here, you bobstay, fetch me a coal to light my pipe with."

I hastened to obey this order, and from my alacrity in answering to the name, the appellation of bobstay stuck to me as long as I was on the ship, and has, in fact, followed me during my whole life at sea.

For the benefit of my readers who do not understand nautical phrases, I will explain to them what a bobstay is: it is a chain from the bowsprit to the stem of a vessel; and when you consider how singularly well my name is adapted for such an abbreviation, you cannot help seeing how ready the mate was to avail himself of the transition with felicitous ease, and how quickly the sailors appreciated his wit.

That nickname was not confined to the Pegasus, for I never afterwards was in a forecabin twenty-four hours after my name was known that some one did not avail himself of its capabilities and fasten it upon me.

Most all greenies are seasick, but I was fortunately as exempt from that disease as though I had been raised in the cradle of the deep; so had nothing to do but learn my duties as quickly as I could, and avoid the end of a rope as well as I was able.

The first was rather hard, for I was called upon for everything of a light nature, especially if it were a dirty job; and the last was infinitely harder, for the mate was after me with a piece of inch rope all the time.

That man used to delight in punning atrociously on my name, and whacking me over the shoulders.

I had run away because I knew my step-mother disliked me, and that my claim against my stepfather was small; but I had not run away from thrashings, for that was an everyday affair.

The men tried it on for some time, but I got vicious in the forecabin after a time, and found that the only way was to give as good as I could; and after throwing bone fids and iron marline-spikes at the heads of a number, and nearly killing two or three, I was let alone.

We cruised in the vicinity of the Western Islands for nearly five months, and at last made Fayal with three hundred and fifty barrels of oil, which our captain promptly shipped home.

The first time he came on board from Fayal, he called for Bobstay, and when I appeared, put the New Bedford Truth-teller in my hand, and said:

"There is an article in that, Bobstay, that I think will interest you; sit down and read it."

With a quaking spirit I read an account of my theft and flight, as well as that my present quarters were known; and with the assurance from the captain that I would be ar-

rested on my return, I begged leave to cut the item from the paper, and having done so, I tore it up, and retreated forward in great anxiety.

There was one thing I didn't know about Captain Easton, and that was, that he had a way of using the men pretty fairly until he had got a good voyage, and then, by ill treatment, he always managed to lose more or less by desertions, and so let their share of oil fall to the owners; while I heard it stated, afterwards, that he had a private agreement with the agents to that effect.

However, I did not know of these facts, and I was bound to desert the first chance that offered, where I had a reasonable prospect of escaping.

My interest in the voyage was over, for I knew that when the Pegasus arrived home again she would be visited by an officer of law charged with my arrest; so I vowed I would avoid any such little attentions on my behalf by staying "the other side of land," as ports in the Pacific are called by sailors.

I had made a chum of an old sailor named Ned Trusty, and as I had told him my escapade, excepting the matter about the money, which I had prudence enough to conceal, I now went to him with a list of my new woes, and asked his advice.

"Cut and run the first chance you have, and if there's half a chance to make our lucky, I'll go with you," he advised; "for I am about tired of this spouter, anyhow, and I'd like to see you get even with your persecutors."

His advice tallied with my ideas, and we clasped hands on it, and promised to leave as soon as we got to our next port of entry, either Talcahuano or Paita.

We had our run on shore at Fayal, flirted with the Portuguese girls, homely and pretty, got lots of fruit, and then went on board for our trip to the Pacific Ocean.

We found that our next port of entry would be Talcahuano, so my chum and I decided to desert the ship there, if it were a possible thing; and wishing to take our clothes with us, we both made a donkey to hold them, or, in other words, a serviceable bag of canvas, the duck being borrowed without leave from the ship's stores; it was the wicked borrow and never return, and we realized the fact when we appropriated it.

"Now, Bobstay," began my chum, as we began to discuss plans for our escape, "all sailors make a mistake in desertions by steal-

ing a boat, or stowing away in some *pulperia*, in the first case suffering everything if they accomplish their purpose, and in the second being sold by the sharks that run the rum-holes; for the old man will offer a reward for our recovery, sure's you're born; so I'm goin' in for a discharge with clean papers for me, and a return ticket for you; and after the old Pegasus is hull down we'll vamose the ranch for newer fields and greener pastures."

"How'll you do it?" I ventured to ask.

"You play off you are crazy, and I'll be sick. The cap'n will swaller your dodge 'cause you cut up rough fore you sailed, and I'll tend to my own case."

"How will I act?" was my next question.

"Act! act like the devil and all his imps, only stick to the p'int that you have only got to go to New Bedford to be a little angel—one of them little fat naked boys with wings on 'em, such as I've seen in the old National Theatre in Boston."

"When shall I begin?"

"You begin now; none too soon. I'll sail in after you hev got fairly started on your v'yge."

On the impulse of the moment I rushed out of the fore-castle, made a dive for the quarter-deck, hustled against the officer in charge, gave several dismal howls of agony, and executed an impromptu war-dance that would have satisfied old Lo! the poor Indian, himself. In a second the third mate, whose watch it happened to be, seized me by the collar, nearly shook my head off, and asked, in savage tones:

"What you making such a devil of a rumpus for?"

I believe that I told him I was a Highland chief in disguise, and that my father was mayor of New Bedford, while my mother run a gin mill on Purchase Street; and if he did not let go I would have him transported to the Province of Fairhaven as soon as he returned; and that I was going home that night as soon as the stage started.

The officer was so thunderstruck by my statements that he let go his hold, and I, taking advantage of my release, made a bolt for the cabin, which I reached safely, and repeated my rhodomontade in a highly impressive manner.

My dodge was successful, for I had the captain and officers round me in a moment; so I was soon tied hand and foot, and carried to my bunk, protesting all the time against

the treatment, and vowing vengeance deep and dire as soon as I completed the journey on which I contemplated starting then and there.

I talked nonsense whenever I was awake, keeping the one fact of my immediate return before my hearers, however, and in three days had established my insanity beyond a doubt.

The fourth night after the development of my mania, Ned Trusty apparently took a fearful cold while furling some sails; the cold soon developing itself into an asthma that was fearful to behold; and whenever he made the least exertion it seemed as though he would die at once.

The captain immediately gave orders for him to watch me, and this he did faithfully, keeping in my neighborhood all the time.

I grew worse instead of better, and Ned reported all manner of stories about my doings, until he kept all hands in a fever listening to his short-breathed but long-winded yarns about me; and I think all hands breathed free when Talcahuano was reported in sight, and I had not burned the ship or killed any one, as was momentarily expected.

The captain sent me on shore as soon as possible with all my dunnage, and Ned accompanied me, sick, both "consul's men," being delivered into the hands of the representative of our country, with the intention of sending us home at the first opportunity.

I was put into the calaboose, so as to be found when wanted, while Ned went to the hospital.

The Pegasus had been gone a week from port, and then Ned felt able to crawl round, so he came down to see me, and after a short consultation, reported to the consul that he believed I was better.

That functionary visited me at once, found to his astonishment that I had no mania, and heard me praise the Pegasus in the highest terms, and declare that I was bound to finish the voyage in her. I was removed to the hospital at once, kept under surveillance a month, and then, being pronounced as sane as the doctor, I was given leave to wander around until my ship came in, when something definite could be done about myself and shipmate, who was getting over his ling difficulty rapidly.

As we made no trouble at all, by the end of another month all watch over us was suspended, and we now purposed to make our exit; for the Pegasus had only sailed to cruise

three months, until the end of the season, and if we were found there and well, we would soon be treading her deck again.

"All we want is a little money now, and we can clear," said Ned, as we sat in the square near the Church of the Annunciation one bright afternoon, filling ourselves with the beautiful *chere moyers*, the fruit of the country.

"I have got nearly a couple of hundred in gold," I whispered.

Ned looked in astonishment, but said quickly, "Let's see it."

Unbuttoning my shirt, I took out a little bag that hung from my neck, and showed him nine twenty dollar gold pieces, and one ten dollar coin, having spent the balance of the two hundred I had taken from the desk for my hotel bill in New Bedford, and for fruit in Faya! and at our present stopping-place.

"Bully! I thought you had the dosh, for you have never stuck at buying things whenever we wanted them; now, boy, I won't ask you how you came by this, and I'll help you get away from here, for I won't go back on a chum that I've helped off; but when we are all clear, you must make a clean thing of your troubles, or we'll have to break mateships."

I promised to do so, for he refused to listen to me then, or in fact until we were clear, and, assured that we were in funds, began to look round to get us off.

Ned soon found a vessel that was going to sail for Honolulu, and he made a bargain with the captain of it to take us there for one hundred and forty dollars; and as he was to sail early the next morning, he agreed to help us leave the hospital, by standing ready when we dropped our bags of clothes out of the window that night.

According to agreement, we passed the bags out into the hands of a couple of sailors, and then followed suit by going ourselves; and in less than an hour we were beyond all vigilantes, and snugly stowed away in the vessel's boat, boards being laid across the thwarts, while we were under them, vegetables being filled in over the boards, making the boat appear full of truck after it was hoisted into position on the cranes.

Our disappearance caused some commotion on shore in the morning, and our vessel was visited in turn with all of the rest in the harbor; but as no one knew anything of us, we were not discovered, and by ten in the fore-

noon we were dropping out by the fort that commands the harbor of Talcahuano, without molestation or fear of capture.

As soon as we were fairly out at sea the boat was unloaded of its vegetables, the boards raised, and we crawled out of our confined quarters as stiff as pokers, but happy at our release.

We were not passengers, for Ned had bargained for the privilege of our working our passage, and we were to pay the price fixed on for the accommodation of landing in another country, and as soon as our limbs got a little relaxed we went into the cabin, where we paid the stipulated amount, and then signed the articles to go to Honolulu for one dollar a piece for the run, and glad to know that the captain would take a couple of sailors from the hands of the consul with a risk of fines if we were discovered before he sailed.

During the trip I told Ned my whole story without a single misstatement, and produced the packet of papers that I had stolen from the desk, and offered to read them to him.

Running them over hastily, he asked:

"Have you ever read them?"

"I have not, but will go through those old things if you want to learn what it means, for I can read," I said, in answer, thinking Ned, from his being a common sailor, was lacking that accomplishment.

"I can read, also, and I will read these," he replied.

"All right; they are worthless, or old Roach wouldn't have had them kicking round so long," I remarked; for I had noticed the bundle in the desk as long as I could remember.

"We'll see," said Ned, putting away the package until he had plenty of opportunity to look it over.

During our whole trip to Honolulu Ned was busy studying the papers whenever he had an opportunity, reading and rereading them carefully, and appearing to take much delight in their pages, for they lasted him until we arrived at Honolulu.

Our voyage had been wholly without interest, and when we were discharged it was with some regret that we took leave of our shipmates, and Ned could scarcely thank our captain enough for the accommodation which he had shown to us at such a great risk to himself.

"Where now?" I asked, as we walked up King Street.

"To the American minister's first," was the grave reply.

I was as willing to be conveyed by Ned there as anywhere, for in my boyish ignorance I thought he meant some one who was settled over a church, the same as our parson in Squaw Betty.

Ned had been in Honolulu before, so he led the way directly through the streets until he came to an imposing office, over the door of which was a large sign with letters in gilt: "Legation of the United States of America."

"What can we do for you?" asked a polite, gentlemanly man, as we entered.

"We wish to see the minister," was the dignified reply.

"Very well, he is before you," said the gentleman, with some curiosity to know what would induce a sailor and a boy to call on him.

"Can I beg your attention for half an hour?" continued Ned.

"You can, if there is anything of importance."

Without any further prefacing Ned went into my history, stating my whole case succinctly, giving my crime in detail, greatly to my horror, shame and indignation, and then continued:

"I have examined this package of papers, find there is considerable real estate and some mortgages that belonged to his father, most of the mortgages being on property used by the Roach who became his step-father, and in addition there are two wills; one by his father, giving nearly all of this property to his mother, and the other being his mother's will, which makes it his, the house Mr. Roach lived in at the time of their marriage being subject to a life-right by him, and he signs the will jointly with her, thus acquiescing in her disposal of this property."

"Have you always been a sailor, sir?" inquired the minister, as Ned ceased speaking.

"No sir; I was a lawyer, but being threatened by a judge in Boston that if I again appeared in court in the condition I then was in that he would have me dismissed—for I was very dissipated then, and very drunk at the time—I quitted the bar, and have been at sea a common sailor nearly twelve years," was the explanation, greatly to the surprise of both of us.

"May I inquire your name?" asked the minister.

"Certainly, it is George Kent."

"I knew it! You were in the sophomore

class when I graduated from college, and I think we were both members of the Alpha Delta Kappa Society in the same year," said the minister, grasping my chum's hand with a cordial grip as he spoke.

It was so, but my friend had deferred making himself known until he found out whether the minister cared to recognize him or not.

The friendly relations that were established were greatly to my benefit, and I was then asked to go to the Queen Emma Hotel and wait while my affairs were being discussed.

In a short time, my chum, whom I will for the future call Mr. Kent, appeared, and said:

"We have been examining your case together, Robert, and as things look to us, we believe that you have been defrauded, and that Mr. Roach only needed the assistance of his new wife to set you adrift in the world. We do not approve of the course you took to escape, but overlook that from your youth, and now propose to take you back to Boston, and then arrange your affairs."

"How will Mr. Roach treat me?"

"I will settle that by getting appointed guardian over you during your minority, if you can trust me after hearing my confession about my drunkenness in my earlier life."

I was only too glad to have him assume charge of me, and a week later we left direct for Boston in the American ship *Bellerophon*.

"We will hail this as a good omen; we started in the *Pegasus*, and *Bellerophon* conquered the winged horse and rose to great eminence; so I trust you will be able to control your passions in future life, as I hope to mine, and shall sincerely try to do," said my new friend, as we sailed from Honolulu.

I promised I would try as hard as he did to lead a perfectly blameless life in future, and again we vowed with renewed promises to live as gentlemen and Christians should.

The minister had loaned my friend all the money we required, he promising to pay the whole if my claim was fraudulent or erroneous, and if it was good, then it was to come from my estate, I paying for both, as Mr. Kent's time was to be at my service in getting me straightened out.

In due time we were back to America, and snugly domiciled in a comfortable house, while Mr. Kent reestablished himself as a legal practitioner and opened an office.

His first step was to be appointed guardian over me, I petitioning the court to that effect, in absence of any known guardian, which was granted in regular order.

Mr. Kent then visited Squaw Betty, and was told by my stepfather that I was a worthless boy, the son of a poor widow whom he married for his first wife, and that I had absconded, taking a large sum of money with me.

Mr. Roach was dreadfully surprised when he learned that the wills had been offered for probate, and that everything he was occupying was seized by due process of law for my behoof; and as he really had intended to defraud me, he soon came to a realizing sense of his situation, and a satisfactory settlement was made, and my guardian eventually came back to Boston with nearly thirty thousand dollars that belonged to me; Mr. Roach having paid that to take the property and be released.

Our debts were soon paid, and the money invested in safe stocks and bonds for me, and then it was mooted between us what should I do; for Mr. Kent, now that he was sober, commanded a fair share of business at once, and as I had imbibed a taste for travel by my adventure, I insisted on continuing to go to sea, and finally prevailed on my guardian to let me do as I desired.

I had had some very remarkable incidents in my life for one so young, and he cautioned me much about my future, advising me of the many snares that are always set to entrap the young and unwary into vice and degradations, and warned me that I should probably never have as pleasant companions as I had found mine to be generally so far, and to particularly avoid the rock of dissipation, on which he had drifted and wasted so many years of his life; and thus, fortified by good and wise counsel, I again went to sea, with the determination to work up to the head of the profession I adopted.

Sea life is a peculiarly hard and dangerous one, and though I had no such adventures again as I had had thrust upon me while a boy, I had others that were more thrilling, and I purpose telling some of my yarns at no future day; but I would strictly advise all young men and boys who go to sea for the fun of the thing only, and with the idea that they will find everything pleasant, and unsophisticated men to play pranks upon, not to do it, for they will surely come to grief, and discover a bed of thorns where their fancy paints idleness and roses; for few boys are treated as leniently as I was treated on My First Voyage at Sea.

MY MIRACULOUS ESCAPES.

SELF SHARPNER

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MY MIRACULOUS ESCAPES.

BY SELF SHARPNER.

I HAVE read of many narrow escapes, both by sea and land, from bloody pirates, or engulfing waves, of the one, and merciless savages, or wild beasts, of the other. With a shudder I recall my own experience, to which, after a lapse of nearly a score of years, I cannot look back, without thanking a kind Providence for my remarkable preservation.

In the year 1852, I took passage on board a ship at San Francisco, California, for the Isthmus, on my way home from the gold mines. Our ship, the *Ida*, carried some two hundred passengers, mostly returning miners. Some like myself had been unsuccessful, whilst others had gathered rich rewards from the golden sands.

According to the old adage, "a good beginning makes a bad ending," we might have been prepared for ill luck, for a vessel never left her port with a brighter prospect than did ours.

It was a beautiful balmy morning in September, with just breeze enough to fill the sails; a day to make one feel young and buoyant, and glad that he is amid the living to enjoy it. How grandly we sailed out into the beautiful bay. In fancy I can yet see the crowd upon the wharf, and the waving of hats and handkerchiefs, as they bade us a silent farewell. How gloriously we passed through the "Golden Gates," those portals through which the wealth and expectations of nations have gone and come; those guardian sentinels that stand to protect the most beautiful bay in the world.

Our voyage for the first half of the way was most cheerful and prosperous, but as we sailed into the tropics storms began, light at first, but each succeeding one grew more severe. They came on with a regularity seldom equalled, until we could almost certainly expect one every evening. They sometimes gave us little warning, and several

times our vessel was in danger of capsizing, or being thrown upon her beam-ends; then any fluttering or neglect of duty might have been fatal to her living freight. Had it not been for one of these storms, and my own carelessness, I perhaps would not have this story to relate.

It is said "familiarity breeds contempt." I think this was true with me. I was a great coward, during the first bad weather, but I gradually became accustomed to it, so that I kept on deck during some of the worst hurricanes we had, and I enjoyed the sight of the wild warring elements, watching our noble tars as they kept the vessel taut and trim in the midst of the howling storm.

On the eve of the twenty-third of September, well do I remember the date, a hurricane came on just at dusk. I hastened on deck, without any premonition of what was to follow. The crew had taken in nearly all the sails, and we were scudding along under bare poles, at the rate of seven or eight knots an hour, through the angry storm; red, blue and yellow lightning was playing and darting athwart the stormy sky; great drops of icy rain struck me in the face; I grasped the gunwale tightly to secure myself; the mate was issuing some orders to the crew, this I well remember. The next instant I was overboard in the foaming, seething waters, whether from a sudden lurch of the ship, or my hold giving way, I know not. Upon rising to the surface, I distinctly heard the cry above the noisy elements, of "man overboard, man the boats!" and saw the vessel fast leaving me to my fate, until the waves and darkness hid her forever from my view. I was an excellent swimmer. I swam towards the fast receding ship with all the strength I could exert, in hopes that the boats, if searching, would find and take me in. Vain hope, futile exertions! If they ever tried to find me I know not. I soon became so exhausted that I ceased all attempts in that direction, and gave up all hopes of being rescued by my late comrades. Something struck me on the head, knocking me nearly senseless, I grasped it—it was a thick, heavy plank, eighteen inches in width, and about ten feet in length. I got upon it—it buoyed me up sufficiently to rest myself without making much exertion to keep my head above the water.

I could now review my situation; awful indeed did it appear to me—the glowering darkness, vivid flashes of lightning, and the furious driving storm. I knew my late com-

rades were far from my reach, and I could not blame them for it, for I doubted if a boat could live in the gale, much less could the ship lay to, to enable them to search for me; and they had probably done all they could to save me in throwing the plank overboard that I now rested upon. I thought it might be only a question of time between my loss and theirs, for if the hurricane continued long it would drive them upon a rocky coast, which would prove fatal to them and the vessel. These thoughts passed through my mind as I tossed upon the angry waves, a hopeless castaway.

How I passed that dreadful night I can scarcely remember. The morning broke clear and bright, the storm was over, but the waves ran mountains high. With my plank yet under me I was sometimes on the pinnacle of the topmost of them, and again deep down in the trough of the sea. Soon as it was light enough, from the highest waves I looked eagerly around. Not a sail was in sight, nothing but the wide expanse of rolling, heaving waters. My spirits sank, for until now I had a faint hope that a vessel, in passing, or a sight of land would greet my eyes. Vain expectations! I prayed and cursed by spells until I was nearly crazed and almost exhausted. Thus time passed, and I grew calm—the calmness born of despair.

About the middle of the day, from the highest waves I tossed upon I thought I could see land, looking like mountain tops. I could not clearly determine, they might be clouds, and now how anxiously I watched for them. After an agonizing interval of several hours, again I saw them; this time I was sure it was land, thrice blessed land! But now the question arose, "can I reach it alive?" This seemed very doubtful. I was cold even under a tropical sun; I was nearly famished from my long fast. Hunger and thirst, with my exertions, had almost exhausted me. Life was dear to me, and I would exert my utmost to reach land, even though it be a rocky, barren coast. Slowly I struggled onward with my plank yet under me. I dared not give it up for fear I should sink to rise no more. Just before daylight faded away I could see land plainly, and I fancied I saw trees growing along the shore, yet I was not sure but it might be imagination.

Kind Providence seemed to favor me, for a strong wind began to blow towards the land. I now made a much better headway, but another difficulty now beset me. I could not

keep awake; tired and wornout nature must give way to sleep. This would be fatal to me, and I exerted myself to the utmost to keep my eyes open, ever and anon arousing myself as I felt my hold giving way upon my plank.

Thus the second night wore away. When it became light I had just energy enough left to look for land. There it was! scarce a league away; but hope and strength were almost gone. I could do but little now to reach it, yet the waves were lending me their help. I knew they would cast me upon it, dead or alive. I hoped the latter, yet it did not seem to matter much which.

How this day passed I have no distinct recollection. I dimly remember of darkness closing around, still clinging to my plank, still ebbing towards the land. I thought I must be dying. Feebly I said a short prayer, then a stunning sensation, and I knew no more.



I awoke out of a refreshing sleep, and looked eagerly around; I could scarcely credit my senses, the past seemed a horrible dream. I was safe on land; the merciful waves had thrown me high and dry when life had almost forsaken me. But now a dreary looking prospect was before me—a long sandy beach, as far as the eye could reach, hemmed in by towering cliffs, on the sides of which grew some stunted pine and cedars. I tried to get upon my feet, but could not for a while, I was so fearfully sore and bruised. At length, with the aid of a reed that lay near me, I managed to stand erect once more.

I was so nearly famished with hunger and thirst that I reeled like a drunken man. I staggered along the beach in search of something to appease my ravenous cravings. I came to a small spring of pure water, and eagerly swallowed all I could hold. I think that was the best water I ever drank in all my life. This strengthened me, and I continued my search for food. Soon I found a dead fish, cast ashore during the night, that the vultures had not yet discovered. I devoured it ravenously; it was not the best of food, yet I thought it was the sweetest meat I ever ate. I now felt like a different being, and I traversed the base of the cliffs, in hopes of finding an opening or pass. By frequent resting I travelled a long distance without any show of success, and I began to fear night would overtake me in close proximity to my late enemy, the salt water. But at length I

came to a banyon, through which flowed a stream of water. A narrow road or trail led along one side; this I gladly followed, not knowing nor caring much whither it led me, so that I got away from the vicinity of the ocean. I found plenty of berries of an agreeable taste; these I ate to my satisfaction. Darkness found me in a dreary, wild-looking place, but less rough and mountainous than that I had passed through. I was in hopes of finding some village or human habitation before nightfall; and now I was in a wilderness, how vast I knew not, nor did I know how to get out, unless by following the trail, which was now much plainer. This I believed to be the best policy, so I went ahead as fast as I could.

Suddenly a crackling in the bush warned me of the near approach of some wild beast. I looked—a low growl, two shining eyes that looked like balls of fire were within twenty paces of me. Horrorstruck I stood transfixed. I knew but too well what it was, and that I was in imminent peril. There, with glistening eyes, waving tail and erect mane, just fixing for a spring, was the lion of the Isthmus. A moment only I gazed, then ran with all the strength I could exert, terror lending fleetness to my feet. I could hear the beast leaping close behind me, and expected every instant to feel his fangs in my flesh. Soon I was so nearly exhausted that I was on the point of giving up, when a small tree was just before me. I made a leap up as far as I could and grasped the trunk tightly with my arms, but before I could get higher out of his reach, the furious beast made a bound for me, just a little short of his object, but succeeded in tearing the flesh open to the bone, from my knee to my ankle, with his sharp claws. However, I was soon out of his reach. Securing myself amid the branches of the tree, I took off my shirt and bound up my wounded limb, and partly stanching the blood, which was now running in a stream. I soon got so weak from my late exertions and loss of blood that I had to secure myself in the forks of the tree to keep from falling. My enemy made some desperate leaps for me, but finding they were short of the object, he finally gave it up, and lay down at the root of the tree and watched me with his terrible eyes.

I was safe for the time, but how long he would stay I did not know, but I judged he would leave at daylight. From my cramped position, and the pain of my wounded limb, I

passed an awful night. However, it wore away at last, and I was free, my captor having left at the approach of day.

My exertions in descending the tree, with my wounded limb, caused me the severest pain. I hobbled along the trail some two miles or more and came to a plain, well-travelled road, running nearly north and south. Judging that south would lead to Panama, I followed it. About the middle of the day I became so faint I could go no further. I lay down by the roadside so wretched that I scarcely would have risen to my feet to save my life.

I fell into a stupid slumber, from which I was rudely awakened by some one shaking me by the shoulders. I opened my eyes and beheld a company of muleteers, who had, at sight of me, paused in the road; they spoke to me in Spanish, which I understood, asking who I was, how I came there, where I was

going. I freely told them of my troubles and escapes, and of my severe wound. They listened in astonishment and much wonder, and ended by giving me to eat and drink of their provision. One of their number, who was quite a surgeon, dressed my wound; they then divided the pack of one mule amongst the others and gave him to me to ride. They were going to Panama, which they said was two days travel yet.

To make my long story short, I will add that I arrived in Panama safe. After staying there two weeks my wound was so far healed that I continued my journey to Chagres, there took passage in a steamer, and in due time arrived safe home, after having passed through almost incredible dangers. As for my late shipmates, I never heard from them, and fear that the vessel with all on board was lost.

MY MISTAKE.

BY TOM TOWNSEND.

I BELONG to a careful family, a family much given to chess and whist playing, that keeps its counsel and cards to itself, counts its chances before it plays, and seldom makes a mistake; but seven years ago this summer I made a great mistake, one the thought of which even to this day makes my cheeks tingle. This is how it happened.

Seven years ago I had just been liberally educated, that is to say I had completed the course of studies required at college and received my degree. The knowledge I had gained there was indeed varied. I had learned that Homer was blind and wrote in hexameters; that although Horace was loud in his praises of poverty, he was very well contented to live on his great friends without attempting to undergo its hardships. I had found out something about chemistry and astronomy, and had hopelessly puzzled over the calculus; I could read some of the modern languages at sight by guessing at half the words. But my progress in some of the branches not put down in the catalogue was a good deal more rapid than in the regular curriculum. I could pull a good oar and was by no means a bad ball player, though that was before base ball was reduced to a science. Billiards and ten pins were my delight, and I took a peculiar pride in being able to play every known game of cards; I could tell the difference between a good and a poor cigar, and could mix a very fair bowl of punch and assist in drinking it.

Naturally my education had been somewhat costly, in fact it seemed as if my expenses increased in about the same ratio that my means diminished. Unfortunately my father was not wealthy. He did his best and then he borrowed, and I also borrowed, so that between us both we succeeded in scraping together a pretty good sized debt, by the time I was ready to leave college. My chum was in about the same condition as myself pecuniarily speaking, and very frequently during the long winter evenings we used to discuss the subject of our debts while toasting our toes before the grate. It was an ever varying topic, possessing fresh interest every day as new bills which we had forgotten were presented to us. I never knew any students, whether rich or poor, who were not often in that state expressed in college slang by the words "dead broke." But there are different degrees of "dead broke." There is what may be called the positive degree, where a man does not owe anything, but just lives along from day to day in a state of abject poverty, without ever having a cent to spend. Then there is the comparative degree, where a rich man's son has overdrawn at home and dares not ask for any more at present. This is not a very bad condition, and of course only lasts a short time. Lastly comes the superlative degree, where a young man is desperately in debt and getting involved worse and worse every day, without any rich parents, or any expectations whatever to look forward to. I

feel perfectly confident in asserting that there never were two young men in college who were "dead broke" in a more superlative sense of the words than my chum and I were constantly. We lived from hand to mouth, getting everything on "tick," that we could by any possibility get without paying for. We were regular Rawdon Crawleys in embryo, with the exception that we had no such skillful financiering agent as Becky Sharp, nor any elderly aunts who might die any time and leave us fortunes.

As I said before, we used often of an evening to discuss our debts while sitting quietly before the fire. Perhaps we ought to have been proud of our debts. A good round debt is frequently only acquired by years of honest industry, but here we had one already made for us just as we were beginning our twentiles. However, strange to say, we did not feel at all puffed up on that account. On the contrary, we felt that the burden was heavy—much too heavy for us to carry—and we were always trying to devise some way to slip it off and get rid of it. One night as we were sitting thus, Tom my chum said to me:

"Fred, it's no use talking, you and I will have to marry heiresses, if we ever expect to get rid of these confounded debts of ours."

Whatever romantic ideas I might have once had about love in a cottage and so forth, my four years of "knocking about" at college had pretty well cured me of, and I had been gradually working up to Tom's point of view. So I said that I had come to the same conclusion, but the question was where was the heiress to be found.

"The future Mrs. Willis," I continued, "must be pretty, agreeable and well educated, besides being heir to something like ten thousand a year. Do you know any such?"

"I don't happen to think of any now," he replied, laughing, "that answers your requirements, but there's nothing like being on the lookout for whatever may turn up."

The morning after this little conversation between my chum and me, I received a note from my aunt, living in the small country town in New England which I will call N—, inviting me to come down and pay her a visit of a few weeks during the ensuing summer. I showed it to my chum.

"Any eligible girls there?" asked Tom, with an eye to the main chance. I really had not thought of it in that light before.

"Why, yes," said I, mentally running over the families in N— whom I thought I could

condescend to honor with my alliance; "there are a good many fine old houses there, and there used to be a number of children belonging to those houses, who I suppose have grown up by this time. The chances are I shall find some very nice young ladies."

"Then go, by all means," said Tom. "Make your hay while the sun shines. At any rate you can enjoy yourself hunting and fishing, if you don't find any other game worthy of pursuit."

Well, so I concluded to take Tom's advice and go, and sent a note to my aunt to the effect that I would be with her, bag and baggage, within a week after my college term closed.

N— deserves a few words of description. It was my father's native place, but his business in the distant city had kept him for a long time away from it. I had been there often when a child, but, since my school and college days, various events had transpired to prevent my revisiting it. Every one remembers that famous speech relative to Lord Chatham beginning, "The secretary stood alone—modern degeneracy had not reached him." These words were peculiarly applicable to N—, at the time of which I am writing. It stood alone; the embodiment of modern degeneracy—a railroad had not reached it. The unearthly yell of the hideous locomotive was unheard among its quiet hills. The mail was brought but once a day in the good old-fashioned stage-coach. The inhabitants retired for the most part before nine o'clock and rose before six. Thirty years ago it had been prosperous and full of business, as its great lumbering stores and its three decaying taverns bore witness. Then came a day when steam was harnessed down with iron bands, and made to do man's work. A railroad was projected through N—, but the magnates of that place, with a worthy conservatism, fought it step by step, finally triumphed, and had the satisfaction of having it pass a dozen miles to one side, instead of through their old town. The old coach was good enough for them they said; their fathers had ridden in it before them, and their children should ride in it after them if they had their say about the matter. But from that day the prosperity of N— had gradually declined. Scarcely a new house was built in it. The bulky old stores became the domiciles of rats and mice. The tavern-keepers closed their bars, and went to farming, except for the short time during the

sitting of court, for N—— clung to its county buildings and court with that pertinacity with which drowning men are said to cling to straws, and although numberless attempts had been made to move them, all had failed. But before the decline in business quite a number of the citizens of N—— had collected moderate fortunes, and were very well satisfied to settle down to whist and back-gammon, and let the world go on as it chose provided it left them in peace. In time they passed away, transmitting their property to their children, who by the very quietness of the place were prevented from spending it, and in consequence there grew to be a score or so of cultivated and educated families in the town. This number was occasionally increased by a retired merchant from the city, who came to settle there in quiet. It was here then that I was going to spend my summer.

As soon as the closing exercises were past, and the fuss and trouble of packing my personal property and sending it home was over, I bade my chum farewell and stepped on board the steamboat bound eastward. My aunt was ready to welcome me, and I was soon comfortably stowed away in this pleasant room on the southwest corner, where I now sit writing these lines. And even as I write here to-day the fragrance of the cinnamon roses drifts in at the open windows just as it used to seven years ago, and I see the fields and woods yet unchanged about the old homestead. Here across the way, on the higher ground, "stands the serried corn like trainbands," and on the rich intervale below the west wind drives the grain into long billows, and sweeping around in a half circle runs the tide of "the river of dark flowing waters," as the Indians called it long ere the white man came to vex it with his dams and mills and bridges, and away beyond the river are the old pine woods which, strange to say, the axe of the lumberman has yet spared.

But to return to my story. My aunt is one of those delightful cooks whom we so often read about, but who are so rare in real life; a woman who actually takes pleasure in seeing you stuff yourself with all sorts of dainties of her own contriving. When I first got into the country I had the appetite of a wolf, and so long as I was fed, felt perfectly contented, and thought to myself that even if I found no more profitable employment than fishing and hunting I should do very well.

So for a few days I remained quiet, satisfied

to look about me and see how the ground lay before undertaking anything. I found two or three college men in town, and a good many elderly persons who remembered me when I was only "so high," and said I was the perfect image of my father at twenty. I easily made friends with these people, and was soon on such good terms with the apothecary, that he used to retail all the village news for my benefit whenever I came into his shop.

There were a goodly number of young ladies in the place, some pretty and others the opposite, but none of them exactly suited my ideas of what the future Mrs. Willis should be. Those who were pretty were dowerless, and those who had wealthy papas were frightfully ugly, and if there chanced to be some who were both pretty and rich they were sure to murder the king's English. Of course that sort of thing never would do for me, so I was obliged to make the most of my aunt's cooking and amuse myself driving, rowing and walking.

One morning I had dropped into the drug-gist's as usual to hear the news, when he said:

"Hal Richards has been in, and it seems they expect Miss Nellie in a few days. You remember little Nellie Richards, Mr. Willis?"

"What, old Richards's daughter that lives in the great house on the hill? Seems to me I do remember something about a little girl who used to carry her books by to school every morning. Is this the same?" I asked with as little appearance of interest as I could, though the fact was that, if I remembered anybody in N——, I certainly remembered Nellie Richards, and the recollection of her, and of the fine house she lived in, had done more than anything else to bring me there.

"The very same," he answered, "but she is far from little now. She finished her education some time ago and she has been in the city for the last year or so. She is the prettiest girl in town, and they say she knows all that's worth knowing. Mrs. Richards has been dead six years. She and the boy Henry, who was then ten, were left. Mr. Richards spares neither care nor expense with either of them, but then he's rich as Croesus. Been heard to say he had an income of twenty thousand, which is pretty fair for this section of country."

"And this Miss Richards is coming home soon, you say?"

"Next Friday, Hal told me."

I had gained just the information I wanted, so I walked leisurely up to my room to consider the situation and the plan of action I should pursue. As nearly as I could make out, from what I knew and from what I guessed, this Miss Richards was the sort of girl I was in search of. Mr. Richards had been engaged in the lumber trade, and, if accounts were at all to be trusted, had been wonderfully successful. He had retired from business quite early in life, purchased the estate on which he now lived, and devoted himself to farming, literature and art. The old gentleman appeared to be of a kindly disposition and to make everything of his two children. Hal was a boy of sixteen, on the point of entering college. I must make an opening somewhere, and Hal seemed to be the most assailable point. I knew him a little already, but we must get better acquainted. That evening I overtook him crossing the long bridge which joins the two sides of the river, and fell into conversation with him. I found that he was going to the same college which I had left, and that he had drawn the same room which I had occupied during my freshman years. I told him college stories, some of which were true, others a good deal embellished, and others totally fictitious. We got along very finely together. It was arranged that we should go fishing the next day.

"And," said Hal, as he left me, "you must see my sister, Mr. Willis. I'll say she's a splendid girl, though I am her own brother. I know you will like her ever so much. She will be here this week."

I thought it just possible I might like his sister ever so much, though I did not say so. I went home thinking that I had at least made a good beginning. If the rest of the family were as easily won as Hal I had the course clear before me.

On the following day we went fishing as we had planned, and I continued to make myself agreeable to him. I also contrived to meet Mr. Richards once or twice. He treated me in a fatherly sort of way; like the rest of the elderly people in town he remembered me when I was only "so high," he also said he had been to school with my father. He insisted on my coming over to look at his place, and taking tea with him. All that night the Richards estate ran in my head whether sleeping or waking.

Well, so the days passed, and Nellie Richards arrived. The same evening Hal

met me in the street and was very urgent that I should come up to the house, though I was not at all in a hurry to present myself, and somewhat demurred.

"Come along," said Hal; "Nell's dying to see you, and hear some of your college stories, and you must come right home with me." As there was no gainsaying him I went.

I had scarcely seated myself in the parlor when in rustled a most lovely girl of eighteen or nineteen. I will not attempt to describe her. Every one either knows or has known several very lovely girls; let him or her imagine Ellen Richards like one of those. She came forward directly and held out her hand without waiting for any formality.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Willis," she said, "you have just graduated, and have come down to the country for a few weeks to astonish us with your city manners and education and so forth, I suppose, but though we live in an out of the way place, you won't find us such perfect barbarians as you expect."

She was entirely at her ease, without the least show of affectation or mannerism. A perfect lady, I thought; none of your pert half bred boarding-school misses, and none of your country girls that

—"always smell of bread and butter,"

but rather of the Shirley Keeldar stamp, with a will and way of her own, and, unless I was very much mistaken, fully a match for me; she was worth playing for whether I won or lost. I had seen some good society, and could tell a thorough-bred woman when I saw her.

"Why, you are actually taller than my father," she continued. "I don't know but I should be the least bit afraid of you, if Hal hadn't told me you were real jolly when one gets acquainted with you."

"I am very much obliged to Hal for the compliment," I said, and then I said other things of no particular consequence. We talked some time, and I went away feeling that Miss Richards was a remarkably bright girl, and that I should have much more difficulty with her than with Hal and the old gentleman.

From this date I was a frequent and apparently welcome visitor at the Richards mansion. There were fishing parties to the neighboring ponds, excursions to the hills, and picnics on the river, to all of which Miss Richards and Hal went, and I was always their companion. I began to study the tastes

and peculiarities of the family, to all of which I endeavored to adapt myself. I found out what people in town they were most intimate with, and I became intimate with them too. I carried the matter a little too far with one of Miss Richards's young lady friends, so that, finding myself in danger of being misunderstood, I was obliged to withdraw abruptly.

Thus the weeks passed. All this time I could not quite comprehend Miss Richards, and I was sometimes afraid that she comprehended me but too well. She always treated me with perfect frankness and cordiality, but if I ever approached any such thing as sentiment, her black eyes seemed to look straight through me, and I retired in confusion. Then I would at times think that she really cared for me, and was only tantalizing me. Of one thing I had taken care to make sure, namely, that I had no rival. One day, while Hal and I were floating lazily on the smooth surface of the river, I said, carelessly:

"How is it that such a lovely girl as your sister is so long without a suitor?"

"Governor drives 'em all away," said Hal; "and if he didn't, it's not every one that Nell herself would tolerate."

O ho! then, I thought, so I am a privileged character in the estimation of both father and daughter; this looks a great deal more promising.

In the meanwhile the fact gradually dawned upon me that I was falling in love. At first this seemed preposterous. I had come to look upon myself as a sort of cynical philosopher, and no more capable of the tender passion than Diogenes himself, but I caught myself at all odd hours thinking of that girl dressed in white and with the black eyes up at the Richards house on the hill. I fought against it desperately, remembering that a man who is not in love with a girl is much more likely to win her than one who is. It was no use; the more I struggled the more fully I became aware that I was caught. Things got worse and worse; whether I ate, drank, rode or slept, I was always thinking of Nellie Richards. I had formerly been quite irregular in attending Divine service. I now went to church twice every Sunday. Nellie Richards was at the bottom of that operation. I even formed the insane project of offering my services as a Sabbath school teacher, because Miss Nellie had a class. What made the matter all the more provoking was that, although she treated me with the greatest

familiarity, she still contrived to make me feel that we were as far apart as when we first met.

Affairs had gone on thus several weeks, when, one day in the latter part of August, a picnic was arranged to go up the river about two miles to a place called the Glen. The boats were to start about three in the afternoon. At noon Hal came over saying that his sister had a headache and was not going, so that I need not bring the boat for her. I reflected that the picnic would only be a bore if Miss Richards was not there, so I told Hal that if my services were not needed in rowing up the river, I felt that I ought to stay at home and do some writing as I had important letters to answer. Hal gave me a sharp look which strongly reminded me of his sister, but went away without saying anything. I believe the young rascal perfectly understood that I stayed away because Nellie did.

It is almost needless to say that when I told Hal I had letters of importance to write, I lied; at that age I had never had a letter of importance to write; all the letters of importance I had anything to do with came to me, instead of proceeding from me, and consisted of those from my father containing funds, and those from my creditors containing duns; the latter always seemed to be of vastly greater importance to the creditors than to me. So I did not write any letters. I felt dissatisfied with myself and with the world in general. I was vexed with Miss Richards for picking out this particular day to have a headache. I was angry that I had not gone to the picnic, after all. I sat down and tried to read, but in some unaccountable way Nellie Richards kept interposing herself between me and the page, till I threw the book aside in disgust. Then I tried smoking. The smoke fantastically wreathed itself into the shape of a young girl with flowing white dress and waving hair. The figure beckoned me, then vanished, and I knew it was Nellie Richards. I lay down and tried to sleep. I think I fell into a doze once, and dreamed I was following a girlish form which I could never catch, but which at intervals turned its black eyes upon me and smiled encouragingly; then just as I was on the point of grasping it, it would glide silently away. I was aroused by a slight rap at the door. I opened it, and my aunt stood there.

"Miss Richards is down stairs and wants to see you," she said.

"Tell her I will be there directly," I replied.

What could this mean? Had the vision I had been vainly following in my sleep suddenly come to meet me? I said to myself as I came down the stairs. As I entered the room she greeted me with:

"Now, Mr. Willis, I know you have finished those horrid letters Hal said you had to write, and you must row me up to the Glen. My headache is all gone; they are to have tea at seven; it's six now, and we shall get there just in time. Don't say you can't, for I know better; you have finished your letters and haven't a thing in the world to do, except to wait on young ladies like me."

Of course I went to the Glen. I should like to see the man who would not have gone after such an invitation. But I could not help thinking that this was rather strange conduct in Miss Richards, to suddenly get over her headache, and come and ask me to accompany her. Was she in love with me, or was she not? that was the question, and a hard one for me to solve. However that might be I felt certain that I was as much in love with her as I could be, though I dare say her father's estate had something to do with it. But I made up my mind as we walked down to the river, that that afternoon at least, I would leave out of the question all feeling and nonsense, and study her, and discover, if possible, whether she really cared anything about me. I would examine my cards thoroughly, and decide whether to play, at the risk of being euchred, or to quietly pass and wait for a new trump. For I was getting into a very delicate situation; if I proposed and was rejected, and my college friends found it out, as they undoubtedly would, I should never hear the last of it. They never would believe I cared for anything except the girl's money.

So I resolved to study her; and certainly, I might have found a less agreeable object of attention than Miss Richards, as she sat in the stern of the boat holding the rudder lines in her hands, and sometimes trailing the tips of her fingers in the clear water of the river. I will not be foolish enough to compare her to a nymph or naiad of the stream, because, at least according to my ideas of nymphs, she did not at all resemble them. She was simply a very beautiful young lady of nineteen, and what in the name of common sense does a man want more?

"Let the mad poets say whate'er they please
Of the sweets of fairies, peris, goddesses,

There is not such a treat among them all—
Haunters of cavern, lake and waterfall—
As a real woman, lineal, indeed,
From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed."

Perhaps she might have very well represented a modern Lady of the Lake.

In less than an hour we reached the Glen, a romantic spot indeed. From the water's edge a bank, covered with underbrush and here and there a large tree, rose rather abruptly for about thirty feet. At the top of the bank was a perfect little paradise of green sward, extending nearly half a mile up and down the river, and running back about sixty feet to the side of the hill, which towered up full three hundred feet, covered all over with the grand old pines, the monarchs of the American forest. At the upper extremity of the Glen, close to the river, was a perpendicular ledge, forty feet high, and some fifty paces in length.

As we neared the place, Hal came running down the bank, exclaiming:

"There, Nell, I do believe you didn't have any headache at all, but only pretended it so that Mr. Willis might row you up all alone."

I watched her keenly at this, and fancied I saw her face flush slightly, though I was not sure. She answered with perfect self-possession, however:

"Yes, of course I did; Mr. Willis is a very agreeable companion, and I mean to make the most of him while he is with us."

I did not more than half like this reply. It was complimentary enough, no doubt, but it seemed hardly natural for a girl who was in love with a young man to talk so coolly about him before his face.

We fastened our boat and joined the picnickers, who were preparing tea. Supper was served pretty much in the regular conventional picnic style. Part of us sat on the grass, and the rest fed us, taking care, like sensible carvers, to save a little something for themselves. After tea the girls brought out some of those interesting games known as "Author's," "Combinations," and the like. I do not say interesting sarcastically, for I presume they are interesting to most of those who play them, only they bore me just a little. While the rest of the party were amusing themselves in this way, Hal touched my arm, and asked me to go with him, and see the place where he had shot a loon the year before. Observing Miss Nellie occupied with the game, among the rest, I consented, and we entered the bushes at the lower extremity

of the ledge before-mentioned, about two rods from where the company were seated. I have said that I intended to find out, if possible, this afternoon, what the true state of Miss Richards's feelings was toward me, and an opportunity was now about to be given me, which, although entirely unexpected, was perfectly satisfactory. As we entered the brushwood I stepped up to the brink of the ledge, and looking over remarked to Hal, thoughtlessly:

"A careless man might walk over this ledge and break his neck with all the ease in the world."

"Yes, that's so," said Hal; and then, as if a new idea had suddenly struck him, he exclaimed, "By Jove! you just get behind this tree a minnit, and I'll wake up those girls."

Now Hal was a downright, open, generous boy, but he had one most abominable habit, that of playing practical jokes. When I became his brother-in-law I meant to break him of it by degrees. For the present, from motives of policy, I thought it best to grin when they were played at the expense of other people, and to grin and bear it when they were played at my own expense. I felt intuitively that Hal was going to play a practical joke, but the whole thing was done before I had time to say a word. Hal actually pushed me behind a large tree, and the next instant was rushing with his hat off toward the group on the green, and shouting, in an agonized voice:

"Mr. Willis has fallen over the ledge, and I think he has broken his neck!"

All of the girls uttered a little shriek, and some of them tried to faint; but owing to a want of experience, I suppose, did not succeed very well. It was quite a fine lively picture, extremely melodramatic. Very thrilling, too, to observe the effect produced by your own supposed sudden death on a company of people. Though I took in the whole scene, yet I had my thoughts sufficiently about me to keep my eyes fixed on Nellie Richards alone. I did wrong in saying that all the girls shrieked. Miss Richards did not. She turned perfectly white, rose to her feet, and looking in the direction of the ledge, said, merely:

"Quick, Hal, where is he?"

At that moment I stepped out. In fact, the whole affair had scarcely taken ten seconds, and I left the bushes as soon as I could recover from my surprise.

As I appeared Hal burst into a shout of

laughter, but his sister gave him a look which sobered him in an instant.

"Henry," said she, "I shall report your conduct to your father, and we'll see whether this joking of yours can't be stopped. I never had such a fright in my life."

Though I had been but a passive agent in the performance of Mr. Henry, I did not fail to reap what I considered a great advantage from it. I noticed that Miss R.'s behaviour was different from that of any other of the young ladies, and I interpreted this favorably to myself. I knew that Miss Richards was not easily disturbed, for when I was riding with her one day, her horse took fright and ran nearly half a mile. She retained her presence of mind, kept him in the road, and finally brought him to a standstill. When I came up she was as cool as if nothing had happened. But I saw that just now she had been greatly agitated. She had, as I thought, showed me her cards, and I determined to play. For once Hal's practical joking had served me a good turn.

After his sister's rebuke Hal did not feel disposed to show me the interesting spot of his sporting exploit, and the party soon broke up and started for home. I had no further opportunity of seeing Miss Richards that evening, for we went down the river in separate boats. When I was left alone I walked out on the long bridge, and looking down into "the dark flowing waters" of the stately river as they hurried by, considered my hand for the last time.

I have always been treated by the Richards family with the greatest cordiality, thought I. I have often been received at their house, which is a favor granted to few, Hal has given me to understand. I am sure that I have no rival in the way, at least so far as Hal knows. Miss Richards herself cannot have a bad opinion of me, or she would not have treated me as she has. And lastly, by her conduct this afternoon, she unmistakably showed that my welfare was of no small concern to her.

Having reached this conclusion I walked hastily to my room, determined to write a proposal that very night, and get the business off my hands as soon as possible.

It was very late, and I went quietly up stairs and struck a light. Then I sat down to write. Of course I tore up half a dozen scrawled and blotted sheets before I got one that suited me; a marriage proposal that was not preceded by at least half a dozen abortive

attempts would not be at all the thing, you know. Finally, I was satisfied, and swept away from in front of me the litter which I had made. Then, for the first time, I perceived a newly-arrived letter lying on the table. It was postmarked "New York City," and was directed in Tom's familiar hand.

"What the deuce does Tom mean by writing to me now?" I growled, half aloud. Tom was not much given to correspondence, and a letter from him always meant something. "Perhaps he has inclosed that ten dollar bill he borrowed of me the day before Commencement," I continued, to myself. Then I held the letter up before the light. No, it was evident that no ten dollar note was inclosed in it. It would have been very surprising if there had been. I never knew Tom to send any money by mail. I think he must have been afraid of its getting lost. At last I broke the seal and began to read; it ran as follows:

"MY DEAR FRED,—I write these lines to inform you that a certain Mr. North is coming to N—— in a few days, and that you may make his acquaintance. North is a friend of our family and a very nice fellow. He can outride, outshoot and outrow everybody, and is withal very delightful company. Do you know a Miss Richards, of N——? You must at least know who she is; a very charming young lady, I understand, though I have never met her. Well, North has been engaged to Miss Richards for three months, but owing to family reasons of his own, has desired it to be kept very quiet. All objections are removed now, however, and he is going down to N—— in three days, the engagement having been made public. North is one of the most promising young lawyers in the city, and the match is thought to be in every way a good one.

"By the way, how does your own matrimonial scheme get on?

"From your old chum, Tom."

A very proper inquiry to put at the end of his letter, certainly. He might well ask about my matrimonial scheme. It was done for, with a vengeance. I saw it all now as plain as day. Relying too much on circumstantial evidence I had made a fearful mistake. Mr. Richards had only treated me as the son of his old schoolmate. Of course such a harum-scarum fellow as Hal could not be trusted with the secret of the engagement. As for Nell herself, either having her heart

preoccupied by her lover, she had never thought of me in any other way than as an agreeable young man with whom to while away the time, or else, and this last idea almost drove me mad, she had seen through me from the first, and resolved to have a little sport at my expense. My imagination had exaggerated the affair at the Glen. Miss Richards had neither screamed nor fainted; she had only acted as any sensible girl would have done, on the supposition that some one of the party had broken his neck.

I read Tom's letter word for word. Then I collected all the paper I had scribbled on, which was on the table, including the sealed proposal, threw them into the fireplace, lighted them, and watched till they were burned to ashes. I next began to pack my trunk, for N—— was no place for me after this. It was nearly two o'clock in the morning when I had finished, and throwing myself on the bed, with most of clothing on, I slept till six. Then I went down and found my aunt, for people in N—— rise early, and told her I had received a letter the night before that required my immediate presence in the city, and I must leave by the morning's stage. I requested her to explain the reason of my sudden departure to the town's people, took a little refreshment, kissed her, and was gone.

One day, a few weeks after these occurrences, I met Tom in the city.

"Halloo!" said he; "I haven't seen you since you came back from N——. Did you see North? You never answered my letter."

"No, I did not see Mr. North," I replied. "I left before he came, and what's more, I didn't want to see him."

"Why, what's up?" said he, seeing that something had gone wrong, for I had spoken hastily, and had betrayed myself.

So I made him swear eternal secrecy, and told him the story of my summer's campaign. The fellow laughed till I thought he would shake himself to pieces. At last I got angry, and said it might be a very good joke, but it was possible to get too much of a good thing. Then he begged my pardon, and said he meant no offence.

"But to think of your laying yourself out as you did, and then—"

He did not finish the sentence, for he went off into another explosion of laughter.

I was a fool to tell Tom. I have read somewhere that it is estimated that no one can keep a secret which does not involve the life or death of anybody, or in which very

important family or political interests are not at stake, more than one year. Tom did better than that. He kept my secret as much as five years. Then he got married, and the next I knew, all the men at the club were talking about it. Some said I had made a fool of myself by proposing the very night before North was going to be married. Others declared that old Richards had found me one day on what he considered rather too intimate terms with his daughter, and had sworn at me like a pirate, and ended by politely kicking me out at the front door. There was still another story, that North had

come down to N——, and hearing my name coupled with that of Miss Richards in a way not particularly gratifying to him, met me in the street one pleasant moonlight evening, and then and there gave me a cowhiding. Finally I grew desperate, and determined to write a full account of that summer's proceedings, so as to prevent all future misunderstanding as to the part I played in them, and I came down to N—— to have the scenes fresh in my mind. I have forgiven Tom for telling. I think he did much better than was to be expected.